SELF PUBLISHER!™

★ MAGAZINE ★

INTERVIEWS:

ADAM KRENN
FREE ISABELO
TIM KENYON
ADAM GROSE
ALEX CABAL
TRAVIS BUNDY
&
FRUUPP!

COVER STORY

TIM KENYON

END TIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL

REVIEWS
INSIGHT &
MORE!!!

February 2013!

THE CREATORS EDGE

44 PAGES OF AMAZING TALENT!

THE WEEKEND LIVES OF SUPERHEROES!

THE ARTISTS' COMIC COLLECTIVE

ISSUE

62

FREE PDF VERSION

PUBLISHER

Ian Shires

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CREATIVE DIRECTOR

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COVER ART

TIM KENYON

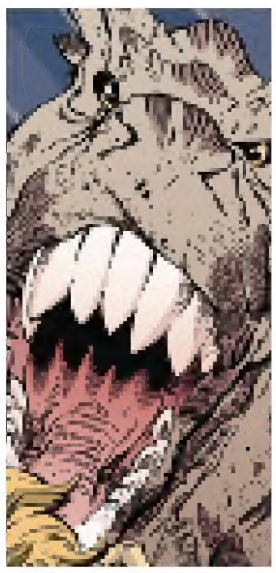
SELF PUBLISHER MAGAZINE

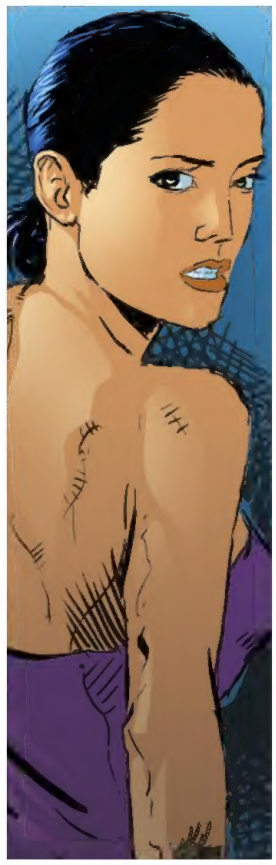
I was recently taken to task about the title of the magazine. The person had a valid point, even though I had an explanation for him. Why is Self Publisher! Magazine only covering self-published comic books? The simple answer right now is: all the volunteers working with me right now are comics people. It's not that we're trying to be "just comics". In fact, the expanded explanation is that SP! Magazine has covered self-published books, music, and movies, in the past, and would like to again. I am a firm believer that audience-building must include cross-genre and cross-interest audiences. Our view of the "creatorverse" is simple: we're getting to know the people making stuff. As a magazine, that is our identity. Anyone that is proud to call themselves a Self-Publisher is welcome in these pages. Anyone that is interested in learning more about people who self publish stuff is welcome to read it. I am going to start actively seeking more writers for the magazine who have interests outside comics. It is because comics is what I grew up doing, and comics people are the people I know, that this magazine has gravitated towards comics, and in this current re-vamping we started last summer, I have been focusing mainly on getting it going correctly, PERIOD. I think we are finally reaching the end of that phase of things. Readership is on the rise, we have people coming to us looking for coverage, and we have writers who are enjoying themselves. It is time we start widening our scope again, so you can expect to start seeing that reflected in our overall content moving forward.

We are also looking right at another phase, which is getting print editions of the magazine going. We've experimented a little bit with POD editions last year, and they didn't really go anywhere. Jay and I have discussed setting up subscription/print edition availability, but we're not quite there yet (his wife just had a baby, so Jay's still adjusting to not sleeping very much). However, many regular readers will remember my ambitions to do giveaway editions at SPACE. Well, the issue to print for that will be NEXT issue. That, plus the person we've lined up to be our cover feature for the issue AFTER that also wants to help do a giveaway at a show he will be attending. So, I'm looking down the barrel of printing two issues, and I'm still begging publishers to send in FREE ads, let alone pay for a print run. Part of me just doesn't understand why I have to put a last minute call out for ads each issue. I've talked about it a few times in our weekly Jump Start newsletters. To do print issue giveaways of the next two issues, I'm going to have to make a few decisions and take a few chances. I am hoping that publishers will see value of our putting as many copies of this magazine into the hands of FANS as we can, and support the effort.

We've seen the readership of SP! climb steadily since our return, but we haven't hit that "critical mass" that I think is out there for us. I don't see why we're not getting thousands of downloads of each issue yet, but we're going to be addressing some availability/publicity issues real soon. Word of mouth has definitely been our friend so far, but as much as we need to rely on people liking what we are doing and spreading the word, we also have to listen to them and give them what they want. And that's something all Self-Publishers need to see, because if a magazine about them can't make it, how can they be expected to make it? To that end, I will continue to do whatever it takes.

- Ian Shires





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Join the Self Publisher forums at: www.selfpubmag.com

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL

One World's End is Another Man's Beginning

BY JENNIFER "SCRAPS" WALKER

Tim Kenyon didn't set out to write a graphic novel in 2000; he was more interested in writing novels and screenplays. It wasn't until his wife, a poet, suggested he turn his script (fleshed out in 2008, during the television writers' strike) into a graphic novel (because they were "really big right now") that he considered it. That might sound a bit mercenary to some, but any writer can tell you that it's always a struggle finding the right stage for a story.

So it was that Endtime became the first project produced by Capstan Comics—a partnership between Kenyon and his friend Dale Lahue.

Of course, writing the story down is only the first step in creating a graphic novel—never mind a series of them—and the partnership begun in 2010 allowed them to pool their resources to finance the artwork on The Arrival, the first book of the Endtime tetralogy. After one false start, the pair found Gerry Kissel, a veteran artist who had just the style that Kenyon was looking for. Of Kissel, Kenyon notes that the people he drew had "no elaboration, no caricature... just pure realism."

Kissel became the first link in the creative chain that would bring Kenyon's story from prose to sequential reality. Concept artist Darran Douglas came on board with the cover, together with Robert Scott McCall as editor, and Bernie Lee as letterer. McCall, in particular, was instrumental in scaling down Kenyon's script into a workable form for Kissel to draw from. Kissel's industry contacts also served to gain the book entrance into several mainstream publishers. Over a year was spent pitching to and courting established publishers before Kenyon finally saw the writing on the wall.

Despite the confidence boost the feedback from the large and medium-sized houses gave Kenyon, he acknowledges that "the financial condition of the comics industry, and of the publishing industry in general, is abysmal. While all of the publishers loved what they saw, no one wanted to take a financial risk on a book that wasn't a sure bet."

The Story Unfolds

The end of the world has provided ample fodder for the imagination since there was a beginning to end. Civilizations die out and are reborn in thousands of pages, almost always with a handful of survivors charged with the weighty responsibility of starting over. But it wasn't just the end of the world that inspired Kenyon to write the first treatment of Endtime, it was the personification of Death, and the idea of what-if—in this case, "What if Death was the hero, instead of the antagonist?"

Jack Kurgan, "an immortal and agent of Death... returned to human form," is that would-be hero of Endtime's version of our world on the brink. Believing that an ancient prophecy about the end of the world can be thwarted, he returns to earth after nearly a century of serving as a collector of souls, looking for the woman he believes is the lynchpin in this endgame scenario. Unfortunately, our first glimpse of Sarah Ramsey doesn't give the reader much hope that her destruction isn't already well on its way. She appears to be the victim of several things—including some very bad decisions, and her husband, Dr. Cole Ramsey, is facing the difficult choice whether or not to commit her to a parental reformation program run by the Warden.

The Warden of Kenyon's universe is not merely an organization of peacekeepers and overseers of prisons, as we're used to, but a very powerful faction of zealous do-gooders—or so they would seem. Throughout The Arrival, we are given pieces of a much larger puzzle surrounding the Wardens, just how far their reach stretches, and what their goal really may be.

The Arrival is not the first work of Kenyon's to feature the Warden--his third novel, In the House of the Blind (as yet unpublished), is where he "first developed the organization called the Warden... There is even some character overlap." In The Arrival, there are whispers that the Warden comes and removes people with no warning and no trace. They are the veritable boogeymen and Big Brother, rolled into one.

Kidnapping and rapid disappearances seem to be common themes in Kenyon's work. In Ersatz Nation, the main character's job is to take people from our universe into his own parallel one at the behest of Mother Necessity—another Big Brother-type persona that had many reviewers of 'Nation comparing that work to Orwell's 1984. When I asked the writer about this prevalence of theme, he said he hadn't noticed the parallel himself. "It certainly isn't intentional, but does reflect my natural distrust of authority. My characters are typically people who are feeling repressed in some way—physically, psychologically, ideologically—and their stories center on their struggle to overcome or break free of it. Oftentimes, the outcome is more bleak than rosy." This "pessimistic view of our overall ability to break free of the social [or] political bonds that hold us in check" does not bode well for the characters we meet in The Arrival.

Getting To Print

It can be a tough shift for many to accept self-publishing as a viable option, even though it's always been more accepted in comics than in prose. Kenyon, whose first nove,l Ersatz Nation, was published by (now-defunct) UK small press Big Engine Ltd., was used to working in the traditional publishing model, even going so far as having an LA agent shopping around his second

novel, American Melancholy. Kenyon also works in academia, as a writing teacher at Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan. Universities have often been known to focus on the mantra "publish or perish," which certainly doesn't help the drive to find a "legitimate" publisher for one's work.

When you spend most days eking out time just to write a first draft, to say nothing of polishing and perfecting a story, the last thing many creators want to do is take on the burden of producing, promoting, and distributing the end project, too. Of course, that same crumbling of the traditional publishing market that made it tough for Endtime to find a home meant that all but the heavy hitters were taking on more and more of those responsibilities themselves, anyway. So why not self-publish and harness the primary selling point of the process: full creative control?

That's where Kenyon and company found themselves in 2012. "The choice to print under the new Capstan Comics imprint seemed like the logical choice," says the writer. "We would essentially spend the same amount of money and retain complete creative and marketing control over the book. It was a win-win."

Getting to that point, though, was not a guaranteed victory. The partnership had enough funds to create the book, but was tapped out when faced with the harsh reality of printing costs. The Arrival is a beautifully-rendered, full-color book— and those don't come cheap. Like many creators in similar spots, the fledgling company turned to Kickstarter and waged an aggressive, high-energy campaign to raise the $4,000 necessary to put The Arrival into print.

In September 2012, the Kickstarter campaign launched. Within 10 days, they'd reached the 50% mark, and were fully funded with a few days of their 30-day campaign to spare. They even managed to reach some stretch goals before all was said and done on October 5, 2012. Even though these sorts of campaigns can be set for as long as 60 days, the writer admits that his own 30-day campaign was rather nerve-wracking as it was. With the all-or-nothing format of Kickstarter, there's a very real possibility of getting close to the goal but not reaching it, and ending up with nothing. I asked Kenyon about his back-up plan in case the crowd-funding hadn't gone as well as planned.

"Honestly, I had no Plan B if Kickstarter didn't go. I planned from the start that it was going to work, no matter what. That really played into my need to be realistic about how much money to ask for and how to compensate the backers. After the campaign started, I contacted absolutely everyone I could think of and solicited support, knowing that the success of the project relied on my commitment to see it happen. It was a huge risk, but I'm glad that I did it and that it worked."

That's uncharacteristically optimistic for a writer whose themes so often center on repression, but it paid off for Kenyon. The Arrival went to press in December 2012, and is now making its way to those early supporters.

Beyond The Arrival

When looking ahead to the rest of the books in the Endtime series, schedule and funding are still very much up in the air. Originally, the idea was to release books 2, 3, and 4 in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively. After the process of bringing The Arrival to print, Kenyon admits that that earlier schedule may not be as realistic as he'd hoped. The stories for the rest of the series are mapped out, but not yet written. The art for The Arrival took Kissel a year to complete, and funds will play a large role in getting everything done. Instead of one year between releases, a more realistic schedule seems to be about "18 months to two years per book."

Production scheduling will rely heavily on how The Arrival is received by expectant fans. While Kenyon is not against another Kickstarter campaign for The Recruit (the next book in the series), he is "treading cautiously because there is a finite amount of resources (in the way of money) available to me from potential backers." Instead, he hopes to be able to fund the production of the second book from the proceeds of the first, and so on. One thing he doesn't have to worry about is the creative team he has assembled. Kissel, Douglas, and Lee have committed to the rest of the story, a commitment that Kenyon hopes will "create some consistency" throughout the series.

It's not just books on the horizon for Capstan Comics. Aside from the ubiquitous extras created as incentives for their 101 Kickstarter backers, the creators reached out to the Springfield, Missouri band, Cohen's Ghost (another project of artist Gerry Kissel) to create a soundtrack for The Arrival. "I wanted to create something that other graphic novels didn't have," Kenyon says. "I figured, since it is such a visual medium, that a soundtrack to accompany the book would add a new level to the experience, much the way a film soundtrack adds a level of texture to the movie's experience." Unlike the Coheed & Cambria albums that tell the story of the later Amory Wars comic series, the Arrival soundtrack (available as a free download on the Capstan Comics website) works more as a mood-setter for reading the book.

A web series is also in the works, which should come as no surprise, considering Kenyon's prior work in short films. What started out as an idea to promote the stories—a la book trailers—in "short, five-minute clips" is being developed into "longer episodes that [revolve] around the longer story pieces and subplots which were cut from the series" when the concept was trimmed down from its original 8-book run into 4, for reasons of production time and finances. There's also the possibility that his first "Warden" story, the aforementioned In the House of the Blind, may be published by Capstan as a companion to the graphic novel series.

The Arrival will have its official launch in April at S.P.A.C.E. in Columbus, Ohio. Future appearances will include Free Comic Book Day at Kenyon's hometown comic shop, Collector's Corner, in Midland, Michigan, Cherry Capital Con in Traverse City in June, and GrandCon in GrandRapids in September. Copies are available now from their website, www.capstancomics.com, in both print and PDF formats.

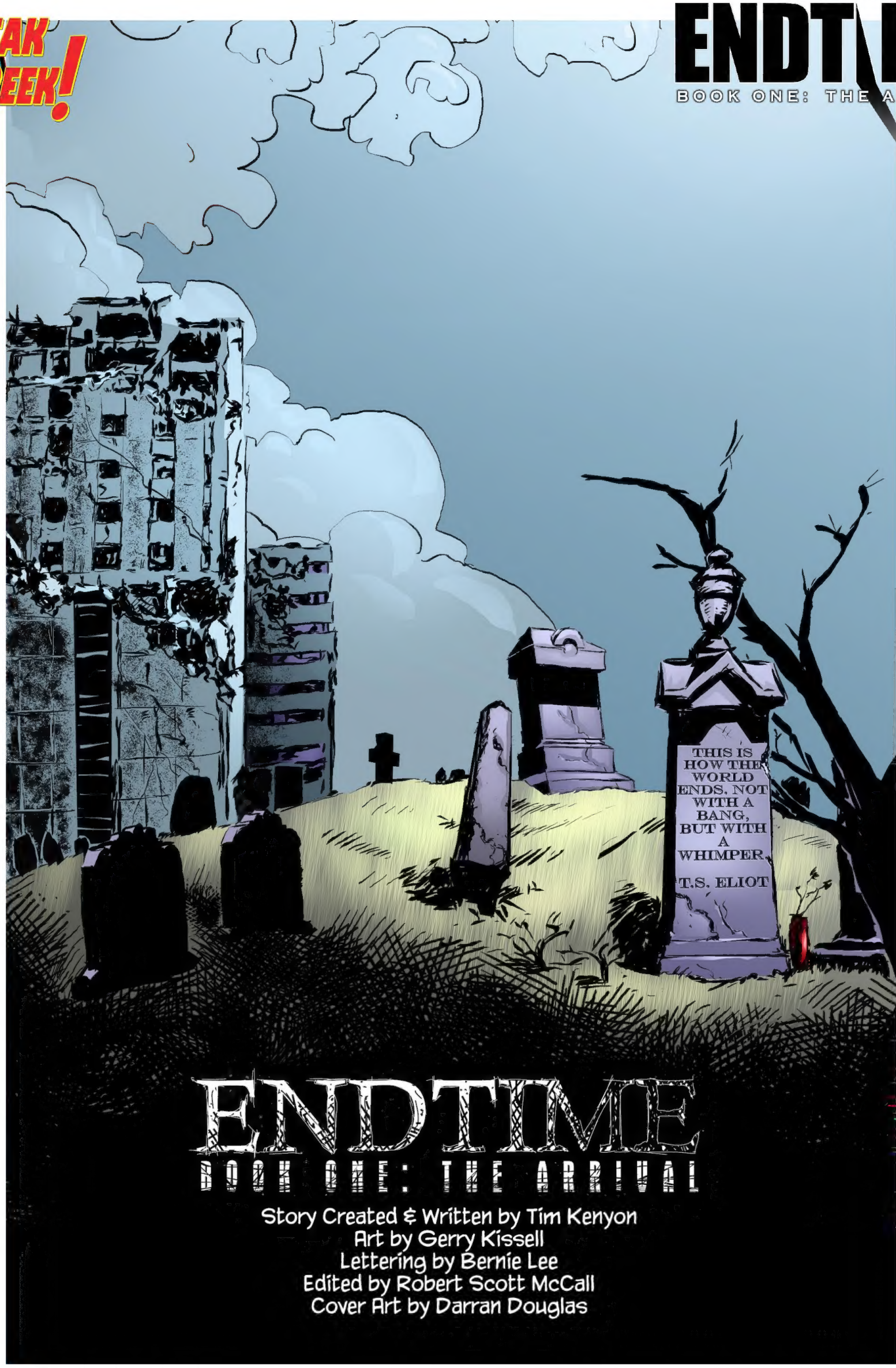
Jennifer "Scraps" Walker is the author and artist behind What to Feed Your Raiding Party, the comic book cookbook for gamers, and writes from her home in Tallahassee, Florida. More of her work can be found at www.jenniferwalkeronline.com

TIM KENYON'S
END TIME
BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL
10|2012

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL



ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL

Story Created & Written by Tim Kenyon
Art by Gerry Kissell
Lettering by Bernie Lee
Edited by Robert Scott McCall
Cover Art by Darran Douglas

SNEAK PEEK!

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL

SNEAK PEEK!

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

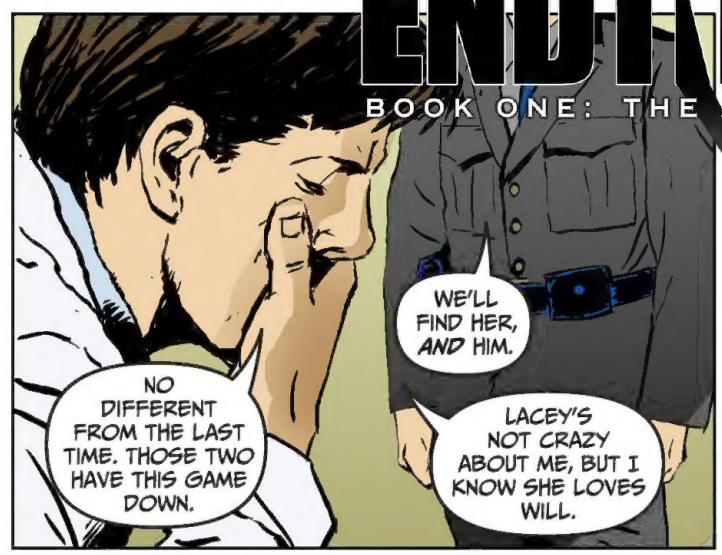
BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL

SNEAK PEEK!

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL


NO DIFFERENT FROM THE LAST TIME. THOSE TWO HAVE THIS GAME DOWN.
WE'LL FIND HER, *AND* HIM.
LACEY'S NOT CRAZY ABOUT ME, BUT I KNOW SHE LOVES WILL.

WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO HER WHEN YOU FIND HER?
SISTER-IN-LAW OR NOT, KIDNAPPING IS KIDNAPPING.
KIND OF A STRETCH TO CALL IT KIDNAPPING, DON'T YOU THINK?
THE WARDEN WON'T SEE IT THAT WAY.
HOW WILL THE WARDEN *SEE* IT?
FUGITIVE STATUS. FEDERAL KIDNAPPING CHARGES. CONSPIRACY. CROSSING STATE LINES WITH A MINOR, IF IN FACT SHE DID.

SARAH'S NURSE IS PAGING ME.
YOU REALIZE THAT REGARDLESS OF THE SITUATION, WE NEED TO TAKE THIS VERY SERIOUSLY.
3RD FLOOR NURSE
I'M NOT THE ONE WHO NEEDS CONVINCING.

SNEAK PEEK!

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL

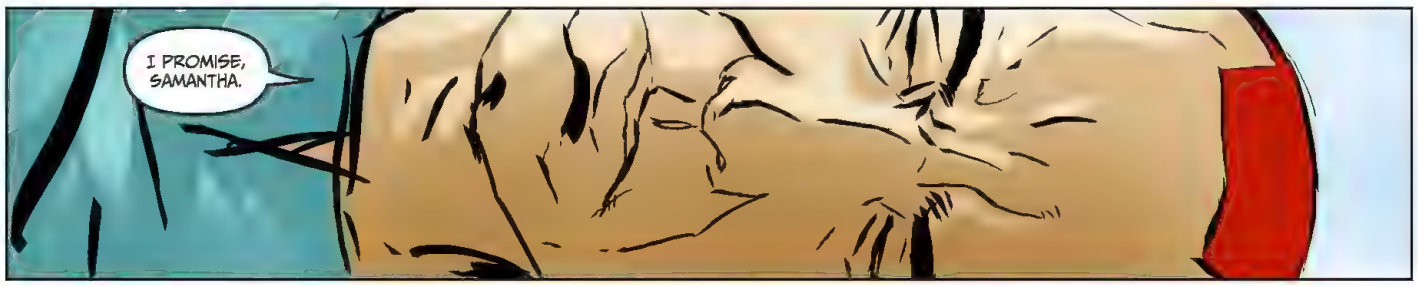
9:55 P.M.
EMERGENCY
EMERGENCY
St.Vincent's
SMOKING AGAIN?
I'M FULL OF SURPRISES.
I SUPPOSE NEXT YOU'LL TELL ME YOU'VE GIVEN UP--
WHERE THE HELL *WERE* YOU EARLIER?
I RECALL YOUR EXACT WORDS BEING *WE'RE DONE.*
I'VE DECIDED TO GO THROUGH WITH IT.
YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
THREE-THIRTY TOMORROW AFTERNOON. I'M *THROUGH* WITH HER. I'LL BE SUBMITTING A PETITION FOR FULL CUSTODY OF WILL. SHE CAN ROT OUT THERE FOR ALL I CARE.
YOU KNOW THE WARDEN WON'T GRANT THAT UNLESS SHE'S BEEN SENTENCED TO A WELFARE INTERNMENT.
YOUR POINT?
HOW WILL LOCKING HER AWAY MAKE THINGS BETTER?
I'LL STOP WORRYING ABOUT THE NEXT TIME I DO SOMETHING SHE DOESN'T LIKE. STOP WORRYING ABOUT WILL WHEN I'M NOT AROUND, WHICH LATELY IS *MOST* OF THE TIME.

SNEAK PEEK!

TIM KENYON'S

ENDTIME

BOOK ONE: THE ARRIVAL



A Written View

BY DOUGLAS OWEN

Self Publisher! Magazine is constantly evolving, bring the best of the self-publishing world to your computer. And as Self-Publisher! Magazine branches out to cover the whole self-publishing world, new and exciting information will be revealed.

I would like to talk about publishing—or, should I say, the job of getting your work to the public? It is a confusing road that should not separate you from your hard-earned money, but there are companies out there looking to do so. They veil themselves in empty promises, double talk, examples of rare successes, and confusing contracts.

You have poured your heart and soul into the pages of your book. You may have even purchased the work of an artist to adorn your masterpiece, hoping that the flash will attract the wondering eye of a consumer. You have pushed copies to publishing companies who have rejected your work outright and now, one says, "We love your work!"

They have dangled a worm in front of you, hoping that you will respond. And of course, you do, hoping against hope that they will give you something, anything, to get the rights to your book. But no, the email says "We will help you. Here is how." And lo and behold, that carrot shows its hook. They want money. But not that much if you take a special package. They want you to send them $1,000 for special editing, and they will edit the manuscript, package it and send it out. If you are lucky, they will even line up a book signing in your local bookstore, along with a press release in your local paper. They sit back and wait.

They may dangle a special—a bonus if 1,000 copies sell, which means $1,000 in your pocket. But is it? They say most authors buy the copies or have family help them out. Does it mean more for the author and no more fees to push your book? Yes, they will give you 20 percent as a royalty, but you have spent $1,000 to get them to publish and $14,000 to buy the books to pay you a $1,000 bonus and $2,800 in royalties. You spent $15,000 to get $3,800. Who wins? The publishing company.

Yes, your book is now on the shelf at a number of book stores, and it is selling. You are getting royalties for writing, but it will take another 3,700 books before you break even! It is the new way publishing companies catering to self-publishing authors make money. Not the best way, just their way. It makes you wonder why you wrote a book in the first place, if you have to spend so much money when you want to make some.

Remember, traditional publishing has a flow of money from the consumer to the bookstore, from the bookstore to the publisher, and from the publisher to the author. When that cash flow moves the other way to the publisher, we have a problem. But if you did take an offer like this and have made money from it, well congratulations to you—for many people have lost their shirts by doing it.

A very intelligent writer told me to do one thing if a publisher asked me for money to publish my novel—run. I now pass that advice to you. From one writer to another: never pay a publisher to publish your book. It is okay that they take a slice of the sale—and usually they take a big slice, for they print and distribute, but they should not take it from you.

THE MAN BEHIND THE MINDSCAPE

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADAM GROSE (INTERVIEW BY DARREN WORROW).

Adam Grose is a man who never stalls on a single medium. If he is not expressing his thoughts through his paintings, he may be scribing words for books or comics for his Clown Press publishing project or, failing that, tutoring others, or even experimenting with sounds. Only fair then that I at least try to jump through a window in his busy schedule to fire a few questions at him.

The first time I met you, was it was at a Bristol comic con in the early 2000s, where you and Tony had been squatting on a corner of the hall for so long, you claimed it as yours and promptly set up shop right there and no one seemed to mind. I admired this so much that I bought the first Cosmogenesis comic. I believe this series was collected into a larger volume at a later date?

Tony and I had just published the first chapter of Cosmogenesis: The Chronicles of Quongo, "The Skull of Muluc". We didn't know how to book a table at the convention, thinking it was more geared to the mainstream Industry. We turned up at the convention at the Watershed and scouted around for a space to sell our book. Tony had noticed some folded up cardboard boxes behind the entrance doors to the main room. We thought, "Let's make a table and see what happens." Later, Mike, the organizer, saw what we had done and, seeing we had been bold enough to do it, he allowed us to continue.

Over the following six years, as each book chapter was released, we booked tables. It was an amazing experience watching the Small Press and Independent scene grow and being a part of it.

During 2007, I published all six chapters in one 550-page book to rave reviews. This was an opportunity bring all the books together and build an epic adventure, adding some background information. Tony and I are currently working on a 'sidequel' to the Cosmogenesis universe, which will come out as a trilogy. The story will explore the background story of one of the lesser-known characters in the book.

On your comic books and graphic novels I notice you only write, teaming up with Tony Suleri as artist. Is this always the way with Clown Press's publications and have you any desire to produce some sequential artwork?

I work with Tony every now and again, on ideas set in and around Cosmogenesis. We have been working on stories since 1987 in underGROUND, The Man Who Hated Tuesday, and others.

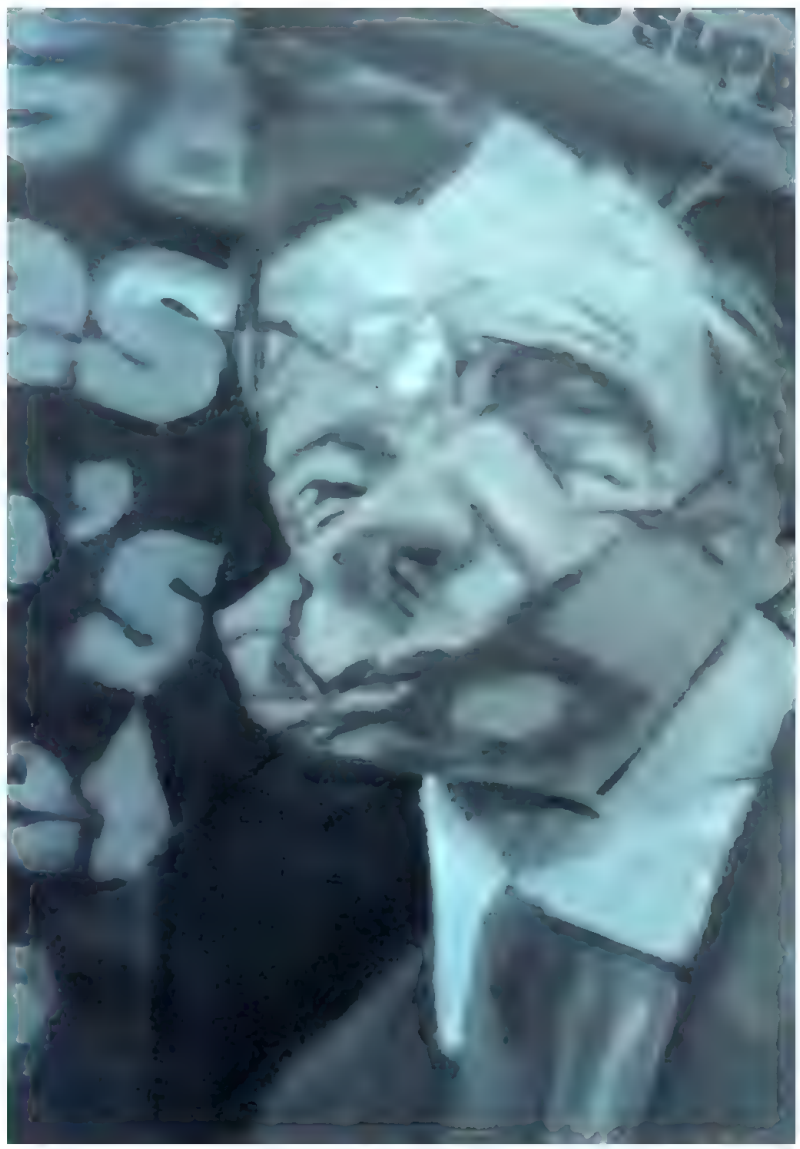
We have collaborated on short stories ("2012: Heske Horror") and the onomatopoeia story Phoenix: A Warrior's Tale. I have illustrated a story by Max Deacon for Zombies 2 and an illustration for Dave West's Strange times Vol 2.

The Prison and Other Tales in 2008 was an opportunity to create an anthology of short stories ranging from two to seven pages. These explored observations and ideas and gave me the chance to explore using different media. I have started on an alternate universe fairy tale anthology from stories I plotted back in 2010. This will be a combination of sequential strips, written text and illustrations. I've also been working on other short stories based in a prison called HMP Temeraire. Some stories have already been published through Insomnia and Sleepless Phoenix.

Recently, I have been creating some four-page art-strips based on random chance called "A Day in Life". These were created whilst studying on the MAFA in Falmouth, during 2011 and 2012 and released through my newspaper experiment, 'M' at the MA Show. I have also released these on-line via Temple APA (the latest issue is out now).

Before discussing other individual projects, what interests me is the variety of your art. You're a painter, an author, an independent comic publisher, and you even experiment in sound. How different do you see these media, or do you try adopting the same ethos for all?

I'm based in Fine Arts and experiment a lot with a variety of media to express my creativity. These can be paintings, comic strips, videos, and soundscape experimental music. I came to realise on the MA course that my ethos [social context] is grounded in chance encounters. Sometimes, the most obscure images, texts or sounds produce something interesting that would have consciously eluded the creative mind. Something else develops in the work, forming an expression that otherwise might not have come about. I consider Nicolas Bourriand's 'relational aesthetics of work' as a point of departure for the changing mental space opened up by the internet.



The music evolves through time-based methods and each sound informs the next layer. I listen to combinations, finding a bridge that will contrast with or complement the arrangement. These evolve through a continual editing process, which can take time.

I don't come to these with a particular 'sound' in mind. Sometimes this works and other times it doesn't. It can vary, and I use the element of chance which occurs in their construction.

We should ask: What... is going on? What... is happening? What... is the affect on the viewer's perception and experience of the piece?

So, what are you working on at the moment?

I'm working on the short stories mentioned above and I'm continuing my painting practice, which is leading me towards some interesting results. I am being drawn to the artificiality of contemporary culture in the West, and the last year has seen a lot of changes in the way I think and produce work.

Saturation, layering, artificiality, constructs, participation, negotiation and the polemical aspects of our contemporary situation in the West have given me the confidence to expand on issues that I have questioned since I was a young child of eight Today, these include our current financial insecurities, austerity measures, unemployment, riots and protests, corporation-ism and corporate control over how and what we should think about and what institutions and 'entities' think is best for us. These include issues on our health, diets, living, politics and the rise of the Occupy social movements around our world which, I see, is in response and as a consequence to these developing draconian measures imposed by what Noam Chomsky and others point out is one tenth of the one percent who wants to control the flow of money and world food arrangements. This world is changing and with it, our consciousness is shifting into a new phase of evolution. There are new ways of thinking and living, negotiating a new reality between those who wish to keep things the way they have always been and those who desire to form their own way of living.

A Facebook status update of yours recently advised that you had embarked on a new novel. Can you leak to us some information about that?

In 2009, I began plotting a supernatural story that was originally going to become a graphic novel. I was about to submit it to Insomnia, when they folded. I had illustrated the first 28 pages, but I thought it might be interesting to see if I could write a novella instead. I decided to follow this instinct and have spent the last three years, on and off, developing the plot further.

It is a supernatural tale that follows the lives of a couple—an architect and a designer —who uncover a hidden secret. I don't want to say too much at the moment, but it is a composite piece involving supernatural elements and it acts as a metaphor for our current times. It also embodies elements from certain conspiracies I've seen on the internet. I find these fascinating and they lend themselves to fiction very well.

I also have plans to develop two other stories, one of which is a detective novel and the other, a conspiracy.

An experimental newspaper is one of the more perplexing of your products available on Lulu. Could you explain your thoughts behind this project?

This stems from my research on newspaper media during my MA. I am interested in the ways we negotiate reality through the

media and how we interpret the news presented to us each day.

I find the ways in which editorial decisions are made interesting, not to mention the use of the images that accompany the texts and how these have become vehicles for informing the state of a particular reality.

What I was experimenting with was the idea of saturation and text and how they create layers of meaning. These meanings are grounded in various environmental factors: how we are educated; where we grew up; in what decade we were born, etc...

Our memory of the past serves as a foundation for negotiating the present. The exponential growth of information via the Internet and access through mobile technologies brings new access, opening up new forms. Lulu, Etsy, Folksy, SCAR, Accent UK, Amazon, Kindle, iPad, tablets, smart-phones... We are democratizing power and we need only to realize this power to understand the shift it can have on the sensible. These new interventions are beginning to scratch the surface in their possibilities. All it takes is a little imagination to spread information as writers, artists and creators, and this is something I am keen to explore and promote further in the public space.

I am always interested in who inspires you—in any medium. Your home page shows one of your dark, semi-collages of layers and saturation which, in my opinion, leaves Richard Hamilton in nursery school, while it is said your words of fantasy yield of Tolkien. So just who are your influences?

I am inspired by the world around me in all its forms. In the case of what you have mentioned above, I am glad you can see the influence of Richard Hamilton in this painting. It wasn't a particular aim I began with, but the title, 'Just what is it about today that makes life so comfortable?' came after I painted the multi-layered piece, reminding me of Richard Hamilton's collage. My image is a paint collage of many images from a variety of times. I had been reading Jacques Ranciere's The Emancipated Spectator, and in the book, he highlighted two artists that used contradictory and hypocritical imagery highlighting differences in the Westerner's point of view on the world. After I created the painting and reflected on the image asking what it was about, Richard Hamilton 'popped' (no pun intended) into my mind, and his image, 'Just what is it about our homes make them so appealing?' naturally applied itself to my image. I reworked the title to fit with our current situation today. We have all this technology, yet we seem to be unable to shift away from old ways of thinking—thinking we can continue on the same path, even though it is leading us to destruction, both materially and spiritually.

I have been influenced by Tony Suleri, Temple APA, Alan Moore, JRR Tolkien, C.S.Lewis, Clive Barker, Stephen King, Dave Hailwood, Brian Bolland (who I met and conversed with when I was 16 at UKCAC 1987—a seminal change in my application as an artist), Brendan McCarthy, Kev O'Neil, Goya, Rembrandt, Titian, Da Vinci, Van Gogh, Cezanne, German Expressionism, Dave Stevens, Grant Morrison, Dickens, Kafka, Wordsworth, Dylan Thomas, Naomi Klein, Steve Yeowell, Neil Gaiman, Dr Who, Joss Whedon, Clint Eastwood, Edgar Allan Poe, Lovecraft, John Freeman, Paul Gravatt, Jackson Pollack, Rothko, Constructivism, Joseph Beuys, Noam Chomsky, Slavoj Zizek, Jacques Ranciere, Carl Jung, Friedrich Nietzsche, Hegel, Heidegger, Jean Piaget, Piero Della Francesco, Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio, Bryan Talbot, Robert Crumb, Harvey Pikar, John Berger, Chris Claremont, John Byrne, Frank Miller, John Wagner, Alan Grant, Lucien Freud, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Clarrisa Beothy and Ra, Rob Gawthrop, and life.

What about the contemporary world of the small press? Who is out there now that you like?

Accent UK produces amazing work and showcases lots of talent. Dave West and his Strange Times; Ben Dickson; Tony Suleri; Dave Hailwood; Jim Stewart; Valia Kapadai; Dave Hitchcock; Cy Dethan and Nic Wilkinson; Barry Renshaw; Shane Chebney; Stuart Gould; Martin Conaghan; Stephen Downey; Leonardo M. Giron; Simon Wyatt; Steve Tanner; Chris Lynch; Mo Ali; Roy Huteson Stewart and John Freeman.

Next time you exhibit, can you make it a bit closer to Wiltshire (my home county)?

Yes. I'm moving from Cornwall back to the area of Taunton, so I'll be closer to Bristol and trains to London. I think in the current climate, we all need to diversify further and, hopefully, I will be able to continue teaching and creating workshops, too. It's getting tough out there and after just finishing an MA and entering into the real world of business, it's going to be tough over the next few years. However, I believe the future and strength of the community will sustain a viable avenue of getting work out there and meeting people, followed by an internet presence, not the other way 'round. We all like to personally meet people and I think this is the way forward.

Thank you for your continuing support and a chance to share my thoughts in this interview. It has given me a lot to think about and consider...

Cheers, Darren! ;D

Thanks for your time Adam, keep painting my friend!

To learn more about Adam Grose and his work, check out his website at www.adamgrose.com.

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The Artists' Comic Collective

An interview with Adam Krenn & Free Isabelo (interview by Jay Savage)

Free Isabelo is half of the guiding light of the Artists Comic Collective, and a self-publisher as well. I first met Free at Comic Oasis, a Las Vegas-based comic shop where he helps other creative hopefuls in their pursuits of careers in comics. I was taken back to my own childhood dreams of working in the comics industry within minutes of speaking with him. Free has that effect on people due to his extreme passion for the comics industry and, more specifically, the art form itself. A part-time DJ and full-time creator, Free has influenced many a creator in Las Vegas, where he currently resides. Free Isabelo is the artistic half of a duo that creates and self-publishes their own title, AVENGER RED, with the other half being Adam Krenn, the scribe behind their popular title. Adam Krenn is an equally-passionate writer, who is amazingly encouraging to aspiring creators, as well. Adam spends long hours writing, lettering, and helping to color the pages of their breakthrough title. Adam and Free are arguably a very well-known force within the Las Vegas Comic art community and rightfully so, as they have worked hard to build that community and they continue to welcome new creators to every weekly Artists' Comic Collective (ACC) meeting they hold. Recently I, had a chance to sit down with both Free Isabelo and Adam Krenn to discuss their project and the ACC, a very successful local community for aspiring creators and even seasoned pros to help each other while inspiring and championing one another to keep creating comics and realizing their dreams. With that said let us jump into the interview!

Jay: Hello Adam and Free thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you both. I would like to start with some questions that both of you could chime in on, and they'll get a bit more individualized as we progress.

Free: Sure but hold on (this is where he took his pants off and sat naked)...okay, SHOOT!

Jay: Now before we go any further please tell me how the two of you met.

Adam: Well, it was across the smoky dance floor of a local club. He was doing his DJ thing and I was wearing my sexiest number. Our eyes met and after several weeks of animosity, it was true love. Okay, okay, we actually met at a local comic shop. Free was sitting with a few other artists sketching and an artist friend of mine was looking for other artists to start a few different webcomics.

Free: I moved to Las Vegas in 2009, and for two years, I was looking for a community of comic artists... and couldn't find one. So, I got a notification from Dann over at a comic shop saying, "come draw with other artists". I went to the first one (it had three other artists there). Adam Krenn and Allen Palmer stopped by to see the artists. They gave a short pitch about a web comic idea and no one was interested... except me.

Jay: At which point did you realize that the two of you should work together? Did you jump right into a working relationship or did that come later? And who initiated the idea?

Adam: Actually, it was right away. Like the aforementioned webcomic thing, within a few short weeks, we had already started producing the first pages of the Avenger Red web comic.

Free: I was on board from the jump! I look for the best in everyone, and I knew these two crazy comic geeks were good people. I liked the energy they were putting out and I liked the polished writing from Adam.

Jay: Realizing that there was really no community for comic artists based in Las Vegas, you guys started the Artists' Comic Collective, or ACC, as it is referred to by most. How did this all come about?

Adam: Again, it all simply started as a way for a few of us to produce multiple weekly webcomics, but even that evolved very quickly. Free, myself, and two others (as far as I know, the other two are no longer involved in the local art community) officially started the ACC as a way to meet more artists and writers, but also, as a way to create a sense of camaraderie and even mild rivalry in an attempt to make everyone involved better artists.

Free: I was asked by the artist running the artist get-together (Dann McNerney) to help promote an event. That led me to do online and grassroots promotions. The event went from four to six artists to over 40 local artists (including Marvel, DC, and Image artists) at every event thereafter. The ACC events division was formed because we wanted to do events for the artist community—and not just to promote a store.

Jay: How hard was it to find an indie-friendly location to hold your ACC events and is there any shop—or shops— in particular that you would like to mention?

Adam: Not too difficult at all. Actually, most local stores were very accommodating to us. Alternate Reality was where it all started, and Ralph is the absolute best, but we simply outgrew his store so fast. In the early days Comic Oasis and Maximum Comics were supportive. More recently, Comic Oasis and Avatar Comics have continued to support us and have become our regular meeting places. Alternate Reality is also still very supportive, as well.

Free: Most venues WANT the ACC to do events at their stores and invite us to hold events, but the size of our events hinders us from being in some of the great places in Las Vegas. We (the ACC) have 20-40 artists at our events, so we can't do venues that can't hold this volume. We wish we could do events at Alternate Reality, Wishing Well Comics, Cheese Boy Comics, etc., but we can't. The only time we can visit these awesome shops is when we do book signings.

THAT WAS TOO CLOSE.
GOTTA GET IN CONTROL OF THIS FIGHT.
GET A COMIC AT O FRAK 'EM JACK
FREEKFLOW ENTERTAINMENT
EVERYBODY ALRIGHT?!
36 DAYS without ACCIDENTS
DID WE GET HIM!?
I DON'T SEE A BODY!
DON'T TAKE NUTHIN' FOR GRANTED...
MAKE SURE THE BASTARD'S DEAD.
GOTTA TIME THIS RIGHT.
MAN, WHADDA MESS!

Jay: Was it difficult marketing the ACC or, should I say, spreading the word that such an organization exists?

Adam: Oooh! "Marketing" sounds so official. If anything I guess the term "grass roots" comes to mind, but honestly, it is more than that. Mostly, we just get out there and meet people at local events and comic shops. We make an honest attempt to talk to people and tell them what we are about and invite them out to our meetings.

Free: Nope, most artists want to create with other artists! And I just brainwash them with free sketches and dollar store candy...oh, and my sultry eyes!

Jay: It is my understanding that the main goal of the ACC is to collaborate with other local creators. Can you elaborate on this for me?

Free: I'll let Adam take this one (this is where Free got up, naked, and did some pilates and stretches).

Adam: Well, that's not the main goal and, to be honest, Free might have a different answer, but that's the beauty of it; the ACC is what you put into it. The main goal and, I would argue, the only goal is to create an open community of artists. Anything beyond that is gravy. That is not to say we don't want to collaborate—on the contrary, we do. We just feel that the creation and nurturing of the community will allow those connections to happen organically. It is a soft touch, to be sure.

Jay: So the ACC is, for lack of a better phrase, an umbrella organization with separate entities that fall under this umbrella?

Adam: Kind of, but the ACC isn't meant to function as any kind of governing body or even as a business. It is just a way for like-minded people to get together, hangout and, with motivation, luck and whatever other intangibles, collaborate on a project.

Free: We have ONWARD! Comics, Gett Comics, Freekflow Entertainment, Valkyrie Komics, Blackline Comics, Blade Action

Force, GoFenris Studios, Harley Squiver Productions, Immortal Samurai Comics. and private artists like Jeremy Lassner, Scott Clark, Will Egli, Joe Decuir, Deryl Skelton, David Dace...

Jay: Have you attended (or are you planning on attending) any conventions as a group and do you find this important for building your community? Would you like to see the ACC grow within other states?

Adam: We attended Comikaze and Las Vegas Comic Expo as a group, as well as the Vegas Valley Comic Book Festival. We are also planning on attending the next Comikaze as a group. Does it directly help the community? Oh yeah, it certainly creates a strong sense of esprit de corps. I would love to see the ACC grow, and actually, a few members in Utah are having their first meeting in just a few weeks.

Free: The ACC has done a few conventions as a group. We first went to Wondercon 2012 as a new entity. We did not have a table, but we went with seven members and met industry pros to establish relationships. The ACC has officially tabled these events...

VVCBF 2011 (Las Vegas, NV)

Stan Lee's Comikaze 2012 (Anaheim CA)

Las Vegas Comic Expo 2012 (Las Vegas, NV)

VCBF 2012 (Las Vegas, NV)

And we are planning to table at...

Emerald City Comic Con 2013 (Seattle, WA)

Wondercon 2013 (Anaheim, CA)

PhoenixCon 2013 (Phoenix, AZ)

Stan Lee's Comikaze 2013 (Anaheim, CA)

More will be added for the ONWARD! comics Avenger Red tour...

Jay: If a creator were interested in either attending an ACC meeting or starting a chapter in their own state, how would they go about doing such things?

Adam: Y'know a community, any community, is what you make of it. Beyond that, I am not sure how to answer, to be honest. Hmm, maybe I can suggest a few rules to follow (and these apply to attending—or even starting—a group)

1. Be willing to engage people. And I know that can be difficult for us introverted artists.

2. Open communication. This means simply, to have regular, open, and friendly meetings, as well as a place where people can go online to communicate. Facebook is actually great for this.

3. Make connections by building relationships. This isn't as casual as or sterile as "networking"—although I won't deny that is a byproduct, it is about genuinely getting to know others and taking an active interest in their projects.

Free: The ACC encourages artists in other states to follow the ACC Las Vegas's example and start chapters in their own towns. We have info and tips on how to do that, which you can get by contacting us. We currently have a chapter in Utah (the ACCSUU at Southern Utah University), headed by Brice Gielgens and Kit Kendall. There're going to be chapters in Hawaii and Arizona soon.

Jay: I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me about the Artists' Comic

Collective and I believe that it is a much-needed aspect of any state's artistic community. I would now like to change the focus of this interview towards you, both as individuals and with regard your working relationship with each other.

When did you first decide that you wanted to create your own comics as a career?

Adam: Creating and telling stories are things I have always wanted to do even as a child. More recently, due to various factors, I have decided to actively focus on this as a change of career.

Free: I always drew comic-style art from when I was 12 years old. I decided to make it a career about two years ago. Since then, I've striven to be the best artist I can be. I've studied the industry from the artistic side to the business side. I've read interviews and books from industry leaders. I've talked to and befriended industry artists and editors. I've studied different story-telling methods from both the artist's and writer's points of view. And, most important of all... I learned promotions and marketing of the comic book industry. It's a never-ending, changing industry.

Jay: Who has had the biggest influence on you outside the comics industry, and how did they affect your life?

Adam: That is tricky. I honestly cannot think of one single influence. For me ,it is many different ones, from my last boss (exemplifying the industry I used to work in), to other writers (non-comics), to even Rocky Balboa.

Free: My mom, dad, and brother are all artistic, so I started at a young age appreciating art. The most influential artist for me was my friend Aaron Messisco. He was a friend of a friend, but he took me under his wing and showed me the comic art form and the way life should be lived... LIVE FREE, DIE FREE!!!

Jay: Who in the industry has had the biggest influence on your comics career, and how has that person changed your work?

Adam: This one is three-fold. First is Scott McCloud, author of Understanding Comics. I cannot say enough about this book. Next, Jack Kirby. I picked up the trade paperbacks of his Fourth World saga, not having read them since I was a kid, and his vision, clarity of purpose, and overall intertwining of plots and storylines really made me aware of what a comic can do to entertain on a grand scale. Lastly are Alan Moore's essays on "writing comics". His works, admittedly, are hit-and-miss for me, but his essays really opened my eyes to some things.

Free: Everyone knows... JIM LEE! His work has inspired me since day one. I also like the works of Marc Silvestri, Frank Frazetta, Joe Weems (inks), Danny Miki (inks), Wendy and Richard Pini, etc.

Jay: What do you do to keep the creative juices flowing?

Adam: Free has a philosophy on dreams coming true. Now, I am paraphrasing, but Free often says that when you begin to have success within what you want to do, you can't flinch and become afraid of it; you have to embrace it and move forward. More recently, I have also come to realize that road trips with Free and a voice recorder are the most efficient ways to flesh out characters and get scripts started.

Free: I go to the ACC Friday Meet-Up at Comic Oasis (Las Vegas) every Friday! When I come back from the ACC Friday Meet-Ups, I'm inspired to draw, draw, draw!!!

Jay: Describe your typical work routine.

Adam: Writing? The aforementioned road trip, when possible, and then I simply put some music on and go. Writing is really about momentum (not my saying, but

true) and I try to get a bit in everyday. Coloring? I honestly put a movie on my PC, shrink it in the corner and go. I found that having a movie or TV show on keeps me engaged and working for hours at a time. Before I found that trick, I would take a break every twenty minutes. Currently, I am going through The X-Files, haha!

Free: I start by looking at my work load for the week. I sort the projects by deadlines. Then I start drawing pencils for these projects, then I ink them... nothing fancy (at this point Free grabs his clothes and puts them on...THANK YOU, CAN FINALLY OPEN MY EYES!).

Jay: What tools do you use to create comics and what makes them the "right" tools for you?

Adam: Honestly, when I started this, I quickly learned from gracious professionals (Brian Miller, Bob Schrek, Joe Weems,

and a few others) that if you want to be a professional, you have to learn to use professional tools. Now, I am not saying what I use is the be-all-and-end-all, but I find Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, with an Intuos 3 I inherited from a good friend, work great for me.

Free: I use regular mechanical pencils from Wal-Mart and basic white erasers. I'm pretty basic. The only things I have that are special are the pens I get from Japan. I order pens exclusive to Japan.

Jay: What element of your work gives you the most personal satisfaction?

Adam: Haha, nothing, yet! I am not satisfied with any single thing I have done yet in my limited catalog. But that is the trick, isn't it? Satisfaction is the dream we chase. I don't think I want to be satisfied. I would get lazy.

Free: I love the feeling of a finished project. I love that feeling when you can stack 22 pages of pencils and/or inks and know it's done. I love the feeling of doing a pin-up or cover and seeing it go to the client.

Jay: What has been the most rewarding project in your professional career–in or out of comics–and why?

Adam: Avenger Red. It is, so far, my only comic, but it represents so much more on a personal level. Though, in years to come, I would like to look back on it as only a first step.

Free: My first Avenger Red issue was printed and SOLD OUT in a few weeks. That was pretty cool. Every printing of Avenger Red (the black-and-white web comic exclusive, the second printing, the VVCBF full color exclusive) has sold out... Thank you to all the supporters!!!

Jay: Can you please tell us a bit more about your self-published project, Avenger Red, and do you have a publishing imprint or company name that the book goes out under?

Free: Adam takes this one too (Free then stood up, and proceeded to do a "raptor-like" dance).

Adam: Avenger Red is a way for me to explore, on a direct level, the themes from the classic novel Crime and Punishment. Not only through the character of Avenger Red, but also some of the other characters. I am excited for the story to move on and grow. Avenger Red is published under our imprint Onward! Comics.

Jay: Now I have read Avenger Red and it is a solid book, but what is it that makes this book a must-read?

Adam: Thanks! But honestly, I can't think of what makes anything a "must-read". I just want to tell a story and I hope people enjoy it. I am proud of Avenger Red, and I believe the finale will be well worth the six issues to get there.

Free: The obvious reason is that I'm on it... ha! No, seriously, the story is well-written and it's very interesting. The artwork is clean and dynamic (I drew the first issue and Dan Blodgett took over pencils on 2-6). It's a classic story with modern interests.

Jay: You guys self-publish Avenger Red so what are some of the biggest hurdles you have had to overcome on this self publishing journey?

Adam: There are two main ones.

1. Fear. Most people won't admit it, but for most of the creative types I know (myself included) fear is the first obstacle.

2. Time. There just simply isn't enough of it. Beyond that, it is just a matter of doing and moving forward.

Free: We (Adam, Dan and I) have a great working relationship. We communicate and work things out pretty fast. The biggest hurdles are from outside the ONWARD! Comics nucleus. We've found that when we go outside the "inner circle," we have to wait, and wait, and wait for results. The fact is, I'm a GO, GO, GO kind of guy. When I have to wait for anything, I get fustrated... hahaha... The money shortage is a factor too.

Jay: Your title has had some success over the past year. what satisfaction do you take from self-publishing this title and what has been the most memorable moment for you both along the way?

Adam: Didn't we already talk about satisfaction? I am not satisfied at all! The most memorable thingis hearing all the positive feedback from people about it and selling out the B&W Special at Comikaze and then having so many people coming to the Vegas Valley Comic Book Festival just to pick up the Issue #1 preview edition. We sold out there too!

Free: I love the reactions of the people that buy our comic. They genuinely seem to like it and want to see more. I love supporting the artist community and it's great that they support us back! Most memorable? When we sold out of the Avenger Red full color VVCBF Exclusive in three hours. We could have sold out in two hours, but we couldn't sell them before the event started!

Jay: GoFenris is an unusual studio name. Please, let me know why you chose this name, what else readers can expect from you in the future, and if there is any more Avenger Red coming soon?

Free: GoFenris Studios is owed by Adam Krenn. I own and opperate Freekflow Entertainment. Freekflow Ent. does comic books, tattoo designs, and sketches at parties and events.

Adam: Honestly, GoFenris is a dead brand for me, because it only represented me. Creating Avenger Red (or any comic) made me realize it is never just about me. Onward! Comics is our brand, and its philosophical meaning should be apparent by now.

Jay: Avenger Red is available in print, correct? Where do readers go to find out more about AR and purchase copies?

Adam: Initially, Avenger Red will be available at most comic book stores in Las Vegas, a few stores in San Jose, Hawaii, Phoenix, and Cedar City, Utah, as well as online and through Drive Thru Comics.com.

Free: You can go to the ACC website and the Facebook page (see contact info).

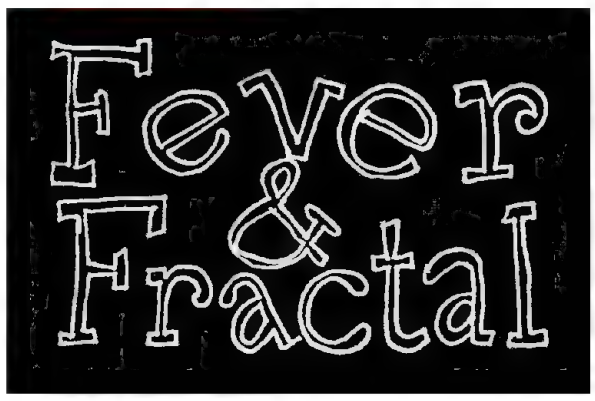
Jay: We've all met very talented newcomers who are trying to get their first professional projects. What's the best advice you could give to a promising new creator, or someone looking to self-publish?

Adam: Always, always, always move forward. Speed is life, stopping is death, fear is hell. Everything else is an excuse and the rest takes care of itself.

Free: DRAW DRAW DRAW!!! If you are an artist that wants to break into the industry or an artist that wants to publish your own book, drawing all the time will help you get into the habit of drawing for a living. LEARN EVERYTHING!!! Draw buildings, learn perspective, draw dogs, cats, alligators, feathers, guitars, candy bars, hats, etc... Because you WILL have to draw it sooner or later! Google might not be available when doing a convention or event so learning everything will come in handy!

Jay: I have thoroughly enjoyed interviewing you both and I wish you all the success in the world. So I leave you with this parting question: what is the most important lesson you have learned, either inside or outside of the comic industry, and why is it important to you?

Adam: Thanks! It has been a pleasure! Biggest lesson? There are no secrets, there is only doing. But, this will mean nothing most people. I know this sounds incredibly pompous, but it is that simple and is just the way it is.



Name: Free Isabelo

Published credits: Eternal Descendants (2009 local Hawaii release only), Avenger Red (comic 2012), The Cule (comic 2013)

Location: I'm originally from Omacron Per Si I-8, moved to Hawaii, and my witness relocation services dropped me in Las Vegas (shhhhh... don't tell anyone!).

Current project(s): Currently, I'm working on two comic book projects. I'm working as an inker for Avenger Red (issues 2-6). I'm also doing promotional pin-ups and promotions for the Avenger Red tour.

Also, I'm illustrating The Cule for Former Employee Comics. I've done five full issues (pencils and inks) that will be launched in 2013. I'm also working on a One Shot comic featuring an ONWARD! Comics character that will BLOW YOUR MIND!!!

Website where readers can find out more about you:

Facebook.com/freekflow808

Artistscomiccollective.com

https://www.facebook.com/FreekflowEntertainment

Name: Adam Krenn

Published credits: Avenger Red B&W Special, and Avenger Red #1

Location: Las Vegas, NV

Current project(s): Avenger Red ongoing, Demolition (working title), and Untitled Project

Website where readers can find out more about you:

www.artistscomiccollective.com

Name: Artists' Comic Collective

www.artistscomiccollective.com

What: A comic artist community open to aspiring comic book artists!

Where: Comic Oasis 3121 N Rainbow Blvd, Las Vegas, NV 89108

When: Every Friday from 2pm - 8pm

SCRIBOPHILE:

A writer's best friend

An interview with Alex Cabal (interview by Douglas Owen)

It's right after the National Novel Writing Month. Hundreds of authors are hunting for information on how to get their latest creations read and published. They find a number of sites offering them the moon for a huge ransom, and a lot of them fall into that trap. But there are a lucky few that find an interesting site that is not only community-driven, but extremely well-created and thought-out.

The site is called Scribophile, and for a self-publishing writer, it is their best friend and an amazing resource that they need NOW!

The brain child of Alex Cabal, Scribophile allows writers to post their work for review by other writers. The writers will over the work, offering comments or even critiquing the work, helping with the editing of the author's masterpiece, and getting the actual work ready for print.

Today we have the great pleasure of talking to the site creator, Alex Cabal, and finding out more about one of the greatest resources a self-publishing author will ever find.

When did you come up with the idea of Scribophile?

I had actually thought of the idea way back in my university days. I was studying Computer Science and minoring in English, because, while I'm not much of a writer, I really enjoy literature and reading. Back in those days, we were seeing the beginnings of the "Web 2.0" movement in web design, and I was getting more and more interested in putting together a site. There were already a lot of sites for writers—Scribophile is certainly not the first, nor the last—but I found them all to be pretty ugly or functionally flawed. I thought I could make something better and, at the same time, get involved in the publishing and literature space, which has always interested me. After a really long time of stewing over the idea (over a year!), I finally sat down and built it.

What was the main thought behind the site?

Scribophile is a community for serious writers, which is centered on peer workshopping. Writers who are interested in improving their craft sign up and get detailed and useful critiques from other dedicated writers. We have one of the most active writing forums on the internet, so members can meet and chat with friendly writers from all over the world. We regularly hold free writing contests with cash prizes. We also have a large educational section filled with professional-quality tutorials and articles, as well as a writing blog with tips, tricks, and musings about the writing and publishing industry.

My goal with Scribophile is to keep growing it into the largest, friendliest, and most useful writing community online—a place where a writer can truly learn, and at the same time meet like-minded people and form relationships that last a lifetime.

How long has Scribophile been running?

Scribophile opened its doors in February 2008, so we'll be starting our sixth year this coming February.

The idea of "Karma" is brilliant, how did you figure that one out?

When I was first thinking of Scribophile, I did a lot of research on how existing writing sites functioned. Many of them let people post as much work as they wanted. Others had no official system, but instead, worked on an honor system where people would post, but were expected to 'pretty please' write a critique in return.

I wanted Scribophile to be a place where truly dedicated writers go, not just the people who wrote a few short stories in their spare time and wanted to put them on the internet. There were already plenty of "portfolio" sites around. So, the karma system was a way to ensure that people contributed to the community before they went around posting their own work, and it was a way to ensure that everyone who posted work was guaranteed feedback.

The look of the site is really clean, did you go through a lot of different designs before ending up with this one?

Thanks! When Scribophile first launched, it looked completely different. Old-time members may remember (and we still have lots of members who will remember!) that the site was predominantly a dark red, with lots of boxes and sharp corners. We had that design for a few years, before I got sick of looking at it. A few years ago, I spent about six months doing a complete redesign, which is the design you see today. I don't consider myself to be a very good graphic designer, so it's very nice to hear people complimenting the layout.

Features have come and gone over the past few years, so the site improves incrementally. The only time I did a complete redesign was that one time.

Do you find authors receptive to the idea of posting their own work for critique by others?

Some are and some aren't. I find the biggest fear hesitant writers have is the fear of plagiarism. It's a valid concern in theory—after all, on the internet, it's easy to copy and paste things—but in reality, it never happens. Seriously, it never happens. Jumping through the hoops of agents and query letters and self-publishing and marketing is so hard with your own writing, that the fact of the

matter is, that doing it with someone else's writing is not financially or mentally profitable for anyone.

Furthermore, Scribophile is a members-only community, and every member joins with their own writing in hand. They're concerned with their own writing and with helping others improve. In our entire six years of existence with hundreds of thousands of critiques written on tens of thousands of works, we haven't had a single instance of plagiarism. So, don't worry about it!

The second biggest concern is the great myth of the publishing industry: those scary and nebulous "first publishing rights." Somehow, a rumor got started years ago that if you post something anywhere on the internet, you lose your "first publishing rights" and publishers won't buy your work anymore. This is untrue and should not concern anyone. First publishing rights do exist (i.e. You can't first publish a work at Random House and then turn around and offer it to Simon and Schuster), but posting fragments of writing to a critique community or message board isn't going to make a publisher turn their nose up at an otherwise good piece of writing. Publishers aren't dumb and they aren't living in an internet-free bubble.

If the word of the owner of one of the largest writing sites online doesn't convince you of that, then you can rest assured that, in any case, Scribophile is a password-protected members-only community, so none of your work is accessible to the public. You have full control over your work at all times—including the ability to rename or permanently delete it—and posting at Scribophile can in no way be construed as actually publishing anything.

So an author finds the site. Describe the process that they go through.

Members sign up and get a small amount of karma points to start out with. They can browse through other members' writing and get an idea of the kinds of critiques members write and expect. After they've written a few critiques themselves to earn enough karma points, they can post their own work for feedback.

Some members spend a really long time interacting in the community without ever posting writing. Our forums are always busy and we have tons of educational material to keep writers occupied.

What was the happiest moment for you with the Scribophile site?

When we reached our 100,000th critique. When I first started Scribophile, I thought of it just as a hobby, and really didn't expect it to grow into something so large. Then one day, I looked at some statistics and I saw we were just a few days away from reaching 100,000 critiques. At that point, I looked at some other statistics and saw that, at the time, we were averaging a few hundred critiques a day, with an average of 400 words each. People were writing 80,000 words of feedback for other writers per day! That's when it really hit me that Scribophile had a life of its own, and that the incredible generosity and talent in our community meant that we were really here to stay.

I also get a lot of smaller happy moments when I see our members getting published. We've had members picked up by Penguin and other large houses. We've had even more members get published in smaller markets. You can see our latest member publications on our home page—there's usually a new one every few days, at least.

What was the saddest moment for you with the Scribophile site?

I'm sad whenever I see a member of our community leave. Scribophile is about the people, and unfortunately, sometimes people can have misunderstandings or personality clashes—especially when you have an environment as diverse as ours, with thousands of writers of different ages, coming from different places, and walks of life. Like any large community, we've had a few excellent members leave because they got into disagreements with someone else. I try my best to be a mediator and get people to understand each other's points of view, but I don't always succeed. It's just one of the vagaries of being part of a large, diverse, and talented group.

Can you tell us about the "Eureka" moment for Scribophile?

I suppose the moment I said "Eureka" was when we were just getting started. I wasn't sure it would work out—building a community from nothing is hard, if not impossible. But then I saw that people were actually joining, participating, critiquing, and generally making Scribophile a great place to be. Just realizing that the idea had merit was a big "Eureka"!

Tell us about the forums that you have on the site. I noticed a lot of activity.

We have six main forums broken down by topic. Anyone can post to these forums to start a discussion. We have a team of moderators that patrol the forums and keep an eye on things to make sure everyone stays nice and friendly. Unlike other online forums, where anything goes and flame wars are common, we at Scribophile take our forums and their guidelines seriously. Our basic rules are a part of the reason for the forums' success, and we don't tolerate jerks.

With the self-publishing movement growing, what do you see in the future of Scribophile?

Scribophile is both a tool for the craft of writing and a place to just hang out and form lifelong bonds with like-minded people. Because of that, I don't see its position changing much, regardless of how turbulent the publishing industry gets. Right now, we're going through a revolution in terms of ebooks and independent publishing, but no matter what e-reader is hot tomorrow, or which website writers are using as a market, or which big publisher merges with the other, Scribophile will still be a place to hone the basic craft of writing.

With that in mind, we've recently started

expanding into focusing more on educational materials for writers. We've just recently opened up a free "writing academy," which is an area filled with free writing resources written by professional editors and educators. For years, our writing blog has offered useful tips, tricks, and insights. I'm also working with some awesome instructors to offer more hands-on writing classes through the site.

What other resources do you supply to the self-publishing world?

Scribophile as a site is the step before publishing. You hone your craft at Scribophile and, when you're ready, you take the next step towards other publishing tools.

I do offer two other tools for writers: Writerfolio.com—which is a site that provides freelance writers with an easy, professional online writing portfolio, and Bookspry.com—which provides professional-quality ebook conversion services.

The site Writerfolio, how did you come to brainstorm that site?

I employ freelance writers to write for Scribophile's writing blog. During the hiring process, I'd have writers sending me writing samples as attachments I couldn't open, or—believe it or not—personal blogs with a thousand unorganized posts and crummy off-the-shelf layouts. That's the kiss of death for your application!

As an employer, I have to sort through hundreds of applicants. Because of that, I want to see the one or two pieces of writing an applicant has personally picked, and I want to see them in an easy-to-read professional format. I don't want to waste time sorting through a thousand blog posts, with half of them about fascinating topics like "What I ate for dinner last night".

So, I decided to help solve that problem. Writerfolio provides freelance writers a super-easy way to set up a professional online web presence. In just a few clicks, freelance writers get a web site at http://theirname.writerfolio.com that they can send to employers. Our web sites look professional, are super-affordable, and are specifically designed to showcase you as a desirable worker and writer.

Tell me more about Bookspry.

Bookspry is a service for ebook conversion. I travel a lot and so, I find myself reading a lot of ebooks. What struck me was the poor quality of a lot of those ebooks. That's not the fault of the writer; most writers write in a program like Microsoft Word and then, they either send their manuscript to their publisher—who converts it for them or, increasingly more commonly, they send it to Amazon or B&N or Smashwords, crossing their fingers that the conversion goes well.

Unfortunately for writers, the conversion rarely goes well. What looks good in MS Word typically looks horrible when put through the automatic conversion process of Amazon, B&N, or Smashwords. (Smashwords even calls their conversion process "the meatgrinder". Do you really want your carefully-written ebook to look like the inside of a sausage?)

Bookspry is a sort of middle step for independent authors. Instead of uploading their MS Word document to the publisher, they first upload it to Bookspry. They can see a live preview of how their ebook will look, and tweak that ebook until it looks great. Once they're ready, they can download a finished ebook file that they can upload directly to the publisher, and which is guaranteed to look great.

You yourself appear to be an extremely creative person. Tell me about the blurb you have when someone contacts you through the site.

Oh yeah, the half-naked crossbow man! I get a lot of people contacting me every day and a lot of the time, it's when they have a problem with something. So I wanted to give them a little light-hearted tidbit after they pressed the "email Alex" button, to lighten the mood a little. He became kind of famous—we even had a site contest about him this last month :).

What type of contests happen on the site?

We regularly feature free writing contests with cash prizes. Usually, we run an official contest at least once a month and we have lots of member-sponsored contests that we list too. All of our contests are always free to enter, and they're a lot of fun!

The whole idea of getting the membership involved in contests is outstanding! Tell me how you get their juices going.

We try to be creative with our writing prompts. Sometimes, prompts can be too vague: "Write a poem about this picture of a tree;" "Write a short story about the sound of the wind". Prompts like that are too vague to be fun. We try to be creative in our prompts, so that the writers can have a little fun while stretching their writing muscles.

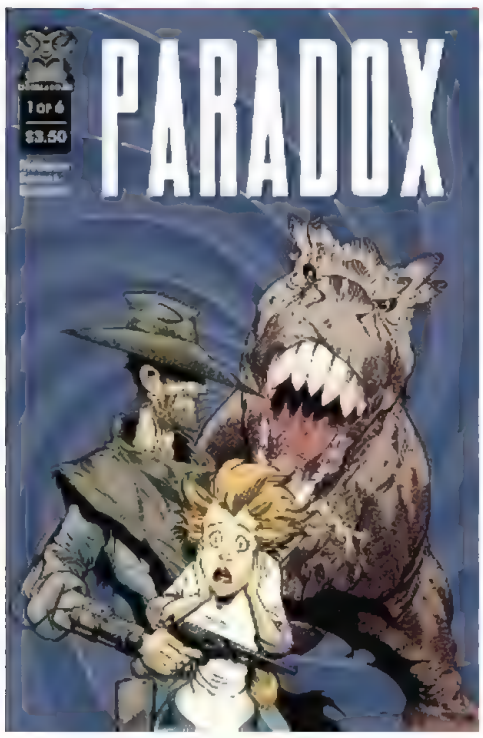
Running a site is time consuming, but getting one up and running is a work of passion. Tell me what helps to keep you going.

It's really all about our great community. There are several people behind the scenes, who help out with day-to-day stuff. Our moderators patrol the forums and make sure everyone plays nice. Our Academy articles are all written by Scribophile members who are also publishing industry professionals—published authors, editors, and educators. All of these people were regular members at one point, and wanted to help out to make Scribophile an even better place. So, it's the passion of the community that keeps me going. Scribophile is a great place, because the people here really care about it!

COMIC REVIEWS

Policy: Dimestore will print reviews from just about any source available. It is our hope you will get an idea if a book is worth pursuing, and hopefully, go out of your way to get it.Our review system is managed online, so if you want anything reviewed, you will need to at least be able to send an e-mail... although our reviewers are authorized to collect things for review in person. Dimestore reviewers should have cards or copies of SP! to show that they are indeed who they say they are. Our reviewers are instructed to be reviewing for the READER, not the CREATOR... so we are sorry if a reviewer does not give a review that would boost your sales. Reviewers are ranked and given clout by reader votes online, and we won't print reviews for long from someone whose reviews people aren't finding useful. That said, we also instruct our reviewers to give constructive feedback and not be mean. Everyone starts somewhere, and SP! Is set up to be one of the first places a publisher may get a real review. Join our team! If you wish to have YOUR reviews featured in these pages, we would love to add you to our reviewers list!

01 Gorillahouse Comics
Paradox #1



24pg. Full Size, full color comic. First published 2012. Written and lettered by Jack McGuigan, pencilled and inked by John Fortune, and colored by Vanessa Beckman.

Samuel Dillon and Katie Baker are Agents of Paradox. They travel through time and space, closing wormholes to prevent spillover from different eras. Dillon hopes to one day save the lives of his wife and son. Katie wants to save herself from being dumped by her boyfriend. Chagatai Khan, the cyborg son of Genghis Khan, plans to conquer all of human history simultaneously, proving that he is worthy of his father's name. Dillon and Katie must both come to terms with what they have lost, and choose stopping Chagatai over changing the past. It's a story about not dwelling on tragedies, big or small, and moving forward with your life, because going back is never as easy as it seems.

Read online for free at: http://paradoxcomic.com/issue-one/

Order hardcopy at: http://paradoxcomic.com/store/ ($3.50 plus $2.00 S&H)

Review: McGuigan knocks it out of the park with this one. Fast-paced, action-packed, with believable characters, snappy dialogue, and a strong plot—I'm sorry that the second issue isn't out yet, because I want more! The art is reminiscent of pre-50s pulp comics and works perfectly. There are another five issues planned for 2013, with a trade compilation projected for December. I know I'll be watching for it. —EF

02 Angela Melick
Wasted Talent: Welcome to the Real World

156pg odd size, full color. Published Spring 2012. Written and drawn by Angela Melick.

http://www.wastedtalent.ca/shop

Review: In transition from college to the workplace, Angela presents a semi-autobiographical series of one-page events of her coming about to using her skills. Funny stuff, highly recommended. Well worth the read. It's done in a manga style, but Melick is an extraordinary artist in styles beyond manga. Get it—WB

03 Grim Rascal
Home Made Heroes #2

Just 20 pages, standard sized, created and published by Grim Rascal.

Further info: www.facebook.com/GrimRascal

Order from Grim.Rascal@hotmail.co.uk

Review: The Homemade Heroes is populated by inept superheroes (who don't seem to do much in the way of heroics, and need the emergency services to save them when they do), and supervillains (who seem a tiny bit more organised than the heroes but, not by much).

The art is very good, but the writing is very hit-and-miss. There's lots of toilet humor, general silliness and pratfalls. It doesn't appeal to my sense of humor. I've seen other people's reviews of Handmade Heroes #1, and they all seem to like it more than I liked this issue, so it might just be a Marmite comic.

This issue contains a mix of one-page skits, a longer, ongoing story, and short half-page 'newspaper format' strips.

The newspaper format skits are a random assortment of jokes featuring the Homemade Heroes universe characters. If you like reading newspaper funny pages, you'll probably really like these. I found Megalodon—a nice-but-dim shark man—to be the most appealing character. The four one-page skits are the weakest of the bunch, particularly "The Flying Squirrel" and "Dead Meat," whose pages seem unfinished (the story and dialogue, not the art) and a bit out of place.

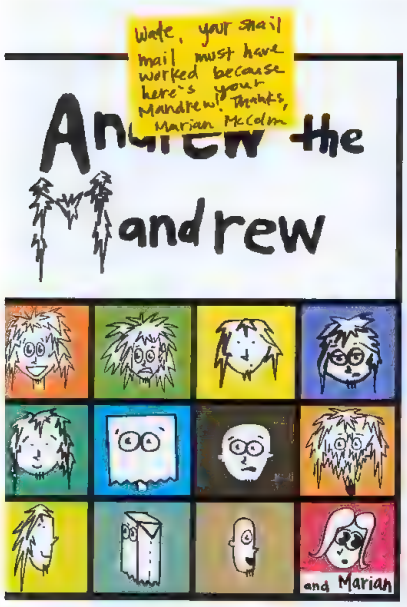
In "Dead Meat," the main character is playing a zombie video game and shoots the arcade machine while a bemused child standing nearby says "You take this game way too seriously". I'm not really sure what the point of the story is. Judging by the positioning of the main character in the final panel, there might be a sly joke about the size of the guns being inversely proportionate to the size of the phallus. Though, that might have been accidental, and I might just be looking too hard to find the humor here.

"The Flying Squirrel" is a crazed feminazi who rants and then punches a guy for offering her a flyer for his gym. Again, there may be some sly satire here., this time about women in comics (main characters backside is focus of the first panel). However, it's just as likely that the joke is that the character goes around beating people up for imagined slights (being called fat); a punch instead of a punchline.

This issue also contains Part One of "Megalodon and Ninja Frog Man's First Bad Guy". It was the best segment of the comic. It features Megalodon and Ninja Frog Man being attacked by Ninja Frog Man's evil brother, who flies around in a blimp. Being Homemade Heroes, they aren't much cope at fighting supervillians, however they do make enough of an impact to kick off a storyline involving pirates.

It also has some cut-out trading cards. Overall I'd give this a 6/10.— LCM

04 Marian McColm
Andrew the Mandrew



20pg Digest size, B+W with color cover.

Published Fall 2012. Written and drawn by Marian McColm.

$5.00 plus $1.95 postage for $6.95 total to: Marian McColm, 3158 Charlemagne, Long Beach, CA 90808.

Review: I'm not removing the sticky note on the cover… ever. It's cute. Writer/artist McColm has assembled a quirky collection of one-and-two-page strips about Andrew, a guy with dreadlocks. Marian herself appears in the pieces both as the Mary Sue problem-solver and the one who runs interference. Offbeat and quite hilarious; in other words, the art is simple cartoony, and there are call-backs to previous jokes. A bit pricey, but recommended.—WB

05 M.R. Neno Productions
The Signifiers #2

52pg Full Size comic, B+W w/color cover. First printing Spring 2010. By Michael Neno.

$8.50 postage paid, at: http://www.nenoworld.com/

Review: The phrase, "What did I just read?" keeps popping up. Another one would be, "Am I on drugs right now?" Highly original… as if Jack Kirby were the artist on a book written by David Lynch. There are many puzzles to figure out here and I wanna stay tuned in. Exquisite and recommended.—WB

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THE WEEKEND LIVES OF SUPERHEROES

The art of comic book bootlegs by Daniel Horn

What do our favorite superheroes do in between the pages of our comic books? Are they really always fighting some new super-powered menace along the never-ending conveyor belt of justice, their only reprieve coming from attending wedding ceremonies? Or do they go to strip clubs, traverse an allegorical Canadian hellscape, or cripple the homeless?

A comic book subculture has coalesced around these questions, gaining momentum in recent years by virtue of the quality of work put out by the creators of bootleg superhero books. Case in point, Michel Fiffe's Deathzone!, an independent homage to John Ostrander and Luke McDonnell's iconic Suicide Squad run, which DC Comics began publishing in 1987. Fiffe, an artist enamored of the characters of that incarnation of the super-villain team, was reluctant to let them disappear into the annals of comics obscurity and so, he created his own Suicide Squad comic: Deathzone!

That Fiffe utilizes DC character properties, like Deadshot and Count Vertigo, in Deathzone! elicits an interesting facet of the bootleg superhero scene. DC's parent company, Time-Warner, has yet to take any action against Fiffe, and while Fiffe was unavailable for a longer discussion, he did take a moment to speak with me directly about bootleg comics and how they thrive just beyond the peripherals of corporate litigators. One insight in particular seemed to be the underpinning of bootleg comic survival.

That insight came when I brought up Hellberta, an underground comic starring Marvel Comics' surly hero, Wolverine. Hellberta was created by Michael Comeau and published by Koyama Press in 2011. The first installment of the Inferno-inspired mini-series pits Wolverine against the evils of Canadian politics. According to Fiffe, Koyama deliberately kept the print-run of this book very limited to avoid any problems with Marvel—now owned by Disney—who is not known for being lax on copyright infringement. Of course, there is an obvious satirical element to Comeau's Hellberta as well, but satire and free use do not account for Fiffe's success. Deathzone! reads like an indie Suicide Squad comic, and although it also saw a very limited print run (only 300 issues were printed for online orders), that book landed Fiffe on just about every radar screen in the comics industry.

Do infringement cases hinge on the scale of distribution? Not exactly, but fair use, covered under Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976, does provide parameters for independent use of properties—some of which pertain to the effect of the fair use work on the market of the properties being used. Obviously, 300 copies of a Suicide Squad book is in no way damaging the success of DC Comics, which sells hundreds of thousands of comic books every month in the marketplace.

Josh Simmons, the creator of a controversial Batman comic in 2007, thought that perhaps it was his "free" price tag which kept him out of trouble. But, a number of factors, such as his satirical use of Batman and the aforementioned low impact on Batman's audience, most likely kept his work within that fair use no man's land. Simmons did change the name of his Batman character when it was picked up by publisher Fantagraphics.

So, now that legality has been established, let's tackle the impetus driving this bootleg scene. Why create bootleg comics? There are myriad reasons, like Fiffe's passion for the Suicide Squad, or Simmons' growing resentment of the Dark Knight.

"I hadn't read any Batman comics in years," Simmons says, "but I was living at a friend's house who was obsessed with Batman. He had an altar with over 100 Batman figurines set up in his living room. Every morning I woke up to Batman, Batman, Batman; he seeped into my brain. And one day, the story popped into my head."

Simmons had a clear desire to subvert his friend's Caped Crusader ideals, and he succeeded. Josh Simmons' Batman depicts a derelict vigilante with a capacity for greater evil than those injustices he projects onto others. It is a jarring and an important satire, one which only completely works with Batman's moniker endorsing it.

When asked if the omission of "Batman" from the printed book altered the overall essence of the work, Simmons replied, "Maybe a little. It's nicer having Batman's name right on the thing."

Indeed, there is a loss of that visceral gut-punch you might get witnessing the legendary Batman preying on helpless hobos. Simmons' unedited offering exemplifies the importance of fair use in defying the archetypes set before consumers by corporate media.

The bootleg scene continues to swell, even amid bogus

cease-and-desist orders (see the Lionsgate and Buffy vs Edward fiasco at www.rebelliouspixels.com). Simmons says he was unaware of the bootleg movement at the time that he wrote Batman, "…although I was partly inspired by CF and Ben Jones's Batman comic and Jeff Brown's Wolverine comic," but now, fair use of superhero media is proliferating at an unprecedented rate.

One of the most salient publishers of bootleg superheroes is Drippy Bone Books. One of their books even takes its title from a Marvel book: Marvel Comics Presents #6. The book depicts an onerous strip club foray for a group of Marvel superheroes. I had a few moments to speak with the Drippy Bone creators about the craft of pilfering and repurposing.

Daniel Horn: Bootleg superheroes have really come into their own recently. What attracted all of you to that particular comics subculture?

Pat Aulisio: I've been drawing weirded-out versions of my favorite characters since I was a kid and just continued into my adulthood. The material for Marvel Comics Presents #6 is more parody and homage/fan-fiction material, rather than straight bootleg—although I did make a superhero series of comics literally called Bootlegs, which would fall under the category of bootlegged subculture http://bootleggedcomics.tumblr.com/.

My favorite stuff in that subculture is Calvin peeing on the Ford logo (and bootlegs of that), bootleg Simpsons material and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles bootleg repackaging. All the images I've seen of Flying Black Batman, the 70's Hong Kong bootleg comic version of Batman, always stuck with me too.

Josh Bayer: I think it was a collective decision. Pat asked me to do this and I said "yeah," and Keenan encouraged the strip club scenario I came up with in an email thread between all three of us, where we spitballed ideas. It all evolved organically. I think there was a tipping point reached with alt. cartoonists embracing superhero stuff back with Coober Skeber, the comic that was sarcastically labeled as a "Marvel benefit anthology," back when Marvel was facing bankruptcy in the early 2000s.

Keenan Marshall Keller: It's a natural thing. We all grew up reading superhero comics and geeking on the images and stories.

I don't know if I've seen a recent emergence of "bootleg" comix on the scene. It seems to me to be more of a growing tide that was started with fan-fiction (There are more Sherlock Holmes bootleg stories than there are stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), and has continued on into comics.

It goes back to Tijuana Bibles depicting cartoon characters fucking, to 50s fanzines featuring fan-based versions of well-known characters, through the 60s and 70s underground and The Air Pirates spoofing Mickey Mouse, until a few years ago, when Josh Bayer put out his ROM comic… I feel like current bootlegs are part of an important ongoing tradition in appropriation and parody.

I think it is a natural and necessary milestone in artists' lives—the need to confront, attack, and kill your gods, idols, and influences. But speaking of our specific comic, MCP #6, Pat pitched the idea to me to do this. He had his story lined up and said Josh wanted to do a ROM strip club comic of some kind. That was all I needed to hear. I wanted to do a comic and publish this bitch.

Daniel Horn: What is it about Marvel characters that influences your comic book pastiches so heavily? Do you feel a certain fan-boy obligation to chronicle the misadventures of your favorite fringe characters, or do you hope to achieve something a bit more subversive through your work?

JB: When I saw Ron Rege doing Spider-Man Brian Ralph doing Man-Thing, and Jeffry Brown doing his genre-centric work, it was inspiring. I appreciated the barrier being removed after the 1990s editorialists in the Comics Journal made every effort to win the culture war against mainstream genre comics (this was done because they saw the juggernauts that Marvel and DC had become as being a major impediment to the art form's progress), which resulted in the shaming of a lot of young cartoonists. Because I respected him, it made me feel very confused that Gary Groth was personally telling me it was a classic young cartoonist's mistake to take inspiration from the Marvel Comics pool—even with a Henry Darger-like style. Doing alt Spider-Man or whatever was supposedly masturbatory, weak art-making. A "real" artist would throw away those crutches and recreate the medium, but setting the bar so high stifled my creativity.

Maybe the world's changed or maybe I just saw a little more of it and stopped being so provincial. Indie comics can be like a small town. I'm glad the tide's shifted. Everyone should do what they want in comics.

PA: I grew up on Marvel Comics, and I first learned how to write and draw comics from Marvel, and I still come up with ideas and stories with 'my version' of my favorite heroes. So, why not?

I always loved the idea of Man-Thing and how he can't talk or think or anything, and always asked myself why there hasn't been an all silent Man-Thing comic ever. I love the work of Steve Gerber but he would probably hate my interpretation of a character he made famous. I'm just a big fan. I have more Man-Thing comics I want to come out with too, as well as a Bill Sienkiewicz-era New Mutants story. There is no real ulterior motive; I just come up with ideas involving characters that already exist. No big deal.

KMK: Well, I was label-loyal as a kid. I loved Marvel; DC, not as much. Not that I didn't read both, but Marvel was cooler and always had better action, back then. But I feel no "fan-boy obligation" to any of these characters. I feel a need as an artist to use the language of

the existing characters in a way that says something personal. All of these characters have had numerous "creators;" people who wrote and drew these superheroes over their long existences. The "character" is always in flux. Doing these Bootlegs-type comics, you are adding your voice to their story. Even if, in the smallest and weirdest of ways, the flux continues. Basically, I see comics with a Satanic eye. DO WHAT THOU WILT. It's all fun!

Daniel Horn: One of the funniest things about this book, I think, is a meta-textual commentary on unlicensed properties. In Marvel Comics Presents #6, you guys depict ROM: Spaceknight leading a Marvel Super-group— a character not even licensed by Marvel any longer leading a troupe of unlicensed Marvel superheroes. Was ROM's licensing limbo (which is only a pun to ROM geeks, I suppose) one of the reasons you cast him in that position?

JB: Yes, Limbo, haha, I get it! I think a story could be written about an inter-dimensional graveyard or purgatory where abandoned or unsuccessful characters are condemned. Only, in my story, Rick Buckler and Herb Trimpe would be exiled there as well, along with anyone who can't get work anymore. That behind-the-scenes story of Rom's copyright issues exemplifies how the weird real-world dreariness often eclipses that fantasy realm. That factored into my selection of Rom. Additionally, I already have a long history of appropriating this character. It just instinctually feels right to use him. My version of ROM is 60 pages, and it was ranked in the Best American Comics 2012 edition. It's available at my store: http://joshbayerart.blogspot.com. Unless I've grossly misjudged you, you should definitely buy it for yourself and everyone you love.

Daniel Horn: One of the things that really interested me in writing a piece about bootleg characters is the overbearing authority of corporations in matters including franchise properties, even if the property is being used as a parody or when that use is protected as fair use (see the recent Buffy vs. Edward video case). How has Drippy Bone Books toed the line of lampoon and have you guys had any run-ins with Marvel or their parent company, Disney, in regards to your work?

PA: Well I don't think Marvel would ever hire me to draw comics, but I still want to make some with these characters, so I just do it anyways. DBB is a small-time art zine/comic publisher; this isn't making anyone lots of money, and the print run is one one-hundredth the size of actual Marvel Comics. We've had no run-ins, since I know it's still small enough that we pose absolutely no real threat to their billion-dollar worldwide empire of franchise properties.

KMK: We have had no run-ins, as of yet (knock on wood). There is always a fear of prosecution in these "sue-happy" days, but I truly believe that parody is an important and vital asset to the world. It is obvious that MCP #6 is a parody. No one would pick it up and believe it to be a Marvel comic. No one.

I do have major issues with how Disney controls their "assets". How is it that we can parody and make fun of the President and actual people and events, even movies and literature, but cannot make fun of a drawing? The reason why is lawyers. Nothing else. It makes no logical sense why it's okay to draw the president eating dog, yet if I draw Mickey Mouse doing it, I get a cease-and-desist letter. It's fucking ridiculous. But things are changing slowly.

I think DBB's has avoided that negative response because we print such small runs, make no money, and it is obvious that we pose no threat to any longstanding company or character,s image.

Daniel Horn: Do you see the unlicensed subculture thriving or being extinguished in the future?

JB: We'll keep doing this till it gets stale. There're plenty of other worthwhile threads from comics history to grab onto and use for our own inspiration. I borrow from lots of old creators, not just superhero comics. I've tied The Yellow Kid, Nancy and Sluggo, and Little Orphan Annie into my comics, too. I used a version of Herb Trimpe crossed with Godzilla in "Rub the Blood," our tribute to Rob Leifeld and 90s excess. You can buy that too at http://yeahdude.storenvy.com. There's a lot of history out there to use.

PA: A big part of the illustration market is fan art. There are plenty of artists that make money selling prints of their take on pop culture characters, so is that considered bootlegging, too? Because stuff like that is only making artists more money. I don't know if it will ever be truly thriving, though. It's just blurring the line of fan art and bootlegging; no one is making blatant rip-offs and mass-producing them or taking credit for creating licensed characters. We're just artists, drawing stuff we love, but didn't originally create.

KMK: I see it existing as long as there is "licensed" entertainment. The entire world is trying to deal with outdated notions of copyright and intellectual property, all of which will become even harder to sort out and to police as the future unravels. But parody will always exist, because humanity will always look to make fun of those in power and those whom others idealize.

Fuck everything. Steal without spite, create with vitality, and stay savage.

CREATOR'S EDGE

AN INTERVIEW WITH TRAVIS BUNDY (BY KATRINA JOYNER)

Hi there. My name is Katrina Joyner, tasked with interviewing Travis Bundy of Creator's Edge. I want to thank Mr. Bundy for making time in his busy schedule to give me this interview! For interested parties, the Creator's Edge website is located at http://creatorsedgepress.com/ , where you'll find all kinds of information about their titles, submission guidelines, and what they're up to in the comics world.

KJ: Mr. Bundy, it looks like Creator's Edge is really the work of a team of two. There is yourself and Shawn Gates. Can you tell me a little bit about what inspired you two to team up and what your goal is as a company?

TB: Well, actually, the best way to put it would be, "And then there were two."

Creator's Edge Press started with eight founding members working out of the back of a comic shop in Puyallup, WA (Comic Evolution). It was the brainchild of the store's owner, Chuck Messinger. He had been keeping pretty close ties with members of the local professional and independent comics scene for years. He was also the head of a writers group that met at the store every week. At some point, the idea came up of using the "Dark Horse" formula and tapping into the comics industry via the store. Eight inspired people, most of which knew no one else in the group except for Chuck— who was the lynchpin— gathered together to form Creator's Edge. Everyone was a writer, though; I was the only artist. We had a singular goal: to find talented creators and be a stepping stone to help them get themselves and their work into the industry, be it on an indie or (eventually) professional level. Basically, we wanted to be the guys who pulled a nobody with amazing talent out of their basement and got his/her work viewed by more people. And we didn't really even want to make a bunch of cash doing it. We really just wanted to get to those people first and help to get them to their potential. We just loved comics that much... and we were all a little disenfranchised with the current state of the "big two" and how the industry was slowly but surely pushing new and amazing ideas by the wayside just to fill shelf space with 37 different versions of Spider-Man or Batman.

But, like most things in life, people got bored. Or they had personal issues that trumped being in a comics company. Or they realized it was far too much work. It all seemed like a barrel of fun those first few weeks:

"We're gonna make COMICS!!! YAY!"

"So... does anyone know how to, uh... you know... do THAT?"

Aside from myself and one other member, no one in the group had ever even self-published their own work, let alone anyone else's. That, compounded with the previously-mentioned reasons, eventually broke eight members down to the two that are left today. And honestly, I couldn't ask for a better and more motivated guy to be in business with than Shawn Gates. He's determined, realistic and fastidious... which is why he runs the financial side of CEP. I handle the artists/creators and the production side. And we both work on marketing and promotion. Besides, it's great to have someone to go to cons with and meet the public. Together, we can relate to almost any fan on any level. I'm a huge film, music, and art nerd and he's more into TV, gaming, video games, and writers. We form like a geeky Voltron and hit the con circuit!

But the goal is still the same. Nothing has changed there. We still want to find very talented people who have no clue what to do with their amazing work. We could be viewed, in many ways, as guides for these people—into an industry that gets bigger and more complex every day. It didn't used to be this way, but with comics premises becoming part of the popular culture (TV, film, games, etc), there's much more stuff out there to compete with and it's coming from all over the globe. I really wish there'd been a company like CEP when I was first getting into making my own books. The one thing that everyone who started the company did have in common was that they had all been there and had fallen on their faces trying to get their own books off the ground more times than they could count. We wanted to take that experience and put it to work for others out there, so that they might be able to avoid the pitfalls of this industry and quell any fears or misconceptions they may have.

KJ: I actually know what it's like to start out with a big group and watch others drift away. I know that usually, people drift away because making comics isn't as rewarding

for them as it is for some, or (usually) real life steps in with a big mallet and smacks their finances on the wallet. So, I imagine I can take it that between you and Shawn, you are still in it for the pure love of comics.

And it sounds like a perfectly balanced team: one of you does the creation side and the other does the business end. I'm sure we all know what happens when two artists who don't care about business get into it together, or vice versa.

Have you helped anybody else out ? Are there any comics you've helped get started that you'd like to talk about?

TB: We're currently helping out a bunch of really talented individuals.

Jeong Mo Yang and Vincent Porter have a book that we just got copies of and are currently promoting, called Blade of the North Wind. It's the story of a young boy who is the sole survivor of a vicious attack on his village by a tribe of bloodthirsty creatures. He must grow into manhood, become the warrior that his late sister always spoke about in fables, and defeat the horde that murdered his people.

Marvin Wynn (who was just written up in issue #61 of SP!) has a book, The Edge, that we're particularly excited about. It's our first superhero title, and man... It's good. A fast-paced and brilliant style that I think will really attract readers and fans of the genre.

Lance Ward, whose book, Stovetop, is the enveloping and heartbreaking tale of a working class stiff who ditches his job, only to have his entire reality begin to crumble around him. And the look isn't something you see every day—which is why I was so drawn to it (no pun intended). The way I usually explain it is, "What if R. Crumb and Jim Henson made a comic?" That's Stovetop in a nutshell.

These are just the most recent examples of people we've worked with to bring their creations to more readers. We've got a few more that we're currently in talks with and we're getting more submissions every week. It's a great experience to meet with so many talented folks. And helping them find more fans feels even better.

KJ: And how much pressure is there on you as the only artist? I often have noticed in the comics game that the ratio of writers to artists is a little bit imbalanced.

TB: As the only artist in the group, I never really found much pressure. Though, in the beginning, I did have to assert myself with the others. As writers, some of them really didn't have an eye for what might or might not "work" artistically when it came to something we were all putting our names on. And, since no one really knew or trusted anyone else's opinion, I had to kind of prove that I was the right guy for the job when it came to judging what art would represent CEP.

I did all of the advertisements and signage for CEP, and still do today. Plus, I really pushed to be the submissions director. I have a high standard for my own art and, since the comic industry is a visual one, I wanted to apply that standard to what we were producing.

On the flip side, I wanted to be the first contact people had when they sent us something that really wasn't "ready for prime time," if you know what I mean. Basically, I get A LOT of submissions... and most of them are very underdeveloped and need more time to have the style and skills of the artist/writer cultivated. While we're a small press, indie comics company, we still must have standards for the level of art and storytelling we bring into the fold. I feel it's my duty, not only to determine what's marketable for us, but to offer advice to those who may just be coming up. I mean, if our mantra is to help people who have great books get more readers and fans, then it should also be our mantra to help those who are not yet at their potential get to their potential with honest, subjective, and sometimes, even harsh criticism of their work. If no one tells you now, you're in for a lot of disappointment later on. This industry is filled with folks who (seemingly) almost enjoy breaking someone down for not being an "industry standard" artist or writer. I know. I've gotten rejection letters from them. Only on a very few occasions did I ever get back real criticism that I could use. Usually, it was either super harsh mockery of my talents or standardized rejections with no specific notes on how I could better my art. I want to offer up, not just my opinions of what comic art should be, but insight as to how to take that journey from being "okay" at drawing to having something that you can really be proud of. I try to answer each submission in a timely manner and give real, constructive feedback with ideas of how to re-approach the art and storytelling. Not just to be better at comics, but better at art in general. They're taking the time to work on something they really care about. I should take the time to give them my full attention and honesty.

And yes, I too have noticed that the balance between writers and artists is a little one-sided. I find more people who have "great ideas" that are going to "revolutionize" comics... but no way of getting the comic on the paper. And, on the other side, I find a lot of people who call themselves comic artists, but have never really drawn a page. I try to explain that drawing a cover or a pin-up is a WAAAY different experience and process than drawing an actual page, let alone a series of pages. Comics are a tough, grueling,

time-consuming process that, in the end, gets very little recognition. It takes someone an average of a month or two of work to finish around 20 pages of a comic (or more time if you have a 9-to-5 like most indie guys— it took me five years to make my first graphic novel). And it takes the average reader only 30 minutes to read those pages.

30 minutes. Maybe a bit more, if they really look at and dissect the art.

That ratio of time in to pay out is really lop-sided. What it all comes down to is that comic artists have to do it because they love the genre and the freedom they have in the realm of comic art. The one thing I stress to anyone who wants to be a part of this industry is that it's only for those with tenacity and true grit. If you're easily bored, go try something else that provides more instant gratification. I don't want to sound jaded, but after drawing comics for essentially 23 years, you adopt a more realistic view of what it takes to make this type of art. That's another thing that I want to impart upon up-and-comers. Have dreams, but be realistic in your approach.

KJ: Judging from what you've told me of your lineup you seem to favor stories with some sort of point. What I mean to say is, they don't sound like your typical "tits and cape" tale.

I'm sure this is not to say you're not open to a superhero story with a lot of depth, right? That seems to be the trend with superhero stories of late, especially in indie comics. Superheroes have evolved to more than thick muscle and a nifty costume. They have feelings, too. And trauma.

TB: Honestly, I (we) love tits and capes... As long as there's something new and original to go along with them. A lot of the books we see—in pitches and in print—are the same, safe stories being told over and over with just a slight twist. What we like to see is something way off the path when it comes to most of our titles. But there will always be a calling for fun stories about super-powered beings locked in combat. And we don't want to be the guys who stand on our high horses and say "Capes and spandex?! Just who do you think we are?! Get outta here with that! We only publish ART!"... Because those types of books are always the basis for guys like us to get into this business. I read X-Men and Batman growing up. A lot. So, if an indie creator wants to follow in that tradition, we have no problem publishing it as long as it stands out to us. Case in point, The Edge is a superhero book. Plain and simple. But what draws us to it is its pacing, style and flair. It's hitting all the right buttons to make it stand out visually. It could be something great and we want to help all comic creators, regardless of genre.

KJ: You say you have a high standard for your art. Where would you place that in the working world? Can you give us some familiar examples of what you think is high and low?

It does seem that some people are out there to break it down—so, if you were in those people's shoes, how would you handle a comic you didn't feel was up to snuff? In the old days, a rejection letter used to come with a why—in prose at least. I had one editor write me a ten-page long critique with suggestions on how to improve. It seems like those days are gone now.

TB: I do have a very high standard for my own work, which I transfer over to those who are submitting work to us. And though I don't like to be judge, jury and executioner when it comes to other people's art, I'd have to say that "high" and "low" art, in my opinion, is based on effort and presentation. Geof Darrow is high art. Charles Burns is high art. Alex Ross (though I've heard many people crap on him over the years and I don't know why) is high art. These are people with very different styles, but so much effort is made to make them stand apart from anything traditional. I'm not a fan of an artist who makes a "big splash" by drawing like someone else. Blazing new trails gets me interested. Even if the art is unconventional or even "good," as long as it's something new, I can find merit. "Low" art, to me, is using your amazing talents to create works that could be confused with other people's styles. Now, I'm not saying that you can't let your influences shine through; it just shouldn't look like a carbon copy. I can't think if any industry names at the moment, but you know it when you see it.

"Oh, that's a nice J. Scott Campbell piece, I... Wait, it's some other guy."

That pisses me off. You've got the gift to draw on the same level as a very talented individual, yet you are afraid to break away into the ether and make your own unique style. To be a "high" artist, I think you must abandon fear, first and foremost.

I can totally agree with you that the days of carefully thought-out, individual critiques are all but gone in the industry. And I wish it weren't so. Though, from my own personal standpoint, I can see why: the industry is way bigger than it used to be and technology has opened the doors of communication and submissions by a huge margin.

It used to be that you had to do your pages, put them in an envelope, take them to the post

office, and actually hand them to a person who would make sure it got on a submissions desk in the next two weeks. An email takes less than a minute... including file upload time. Plus, with the popularity of comics skyrocketing, I'm sure that your average submissions desk at a big-time publisher is overflowing with the good, the bad, and the downright ugly. If that's the case, I can understand very quick and often curt responses to those whose art isn't up to their standards. But it doesn't make it right.

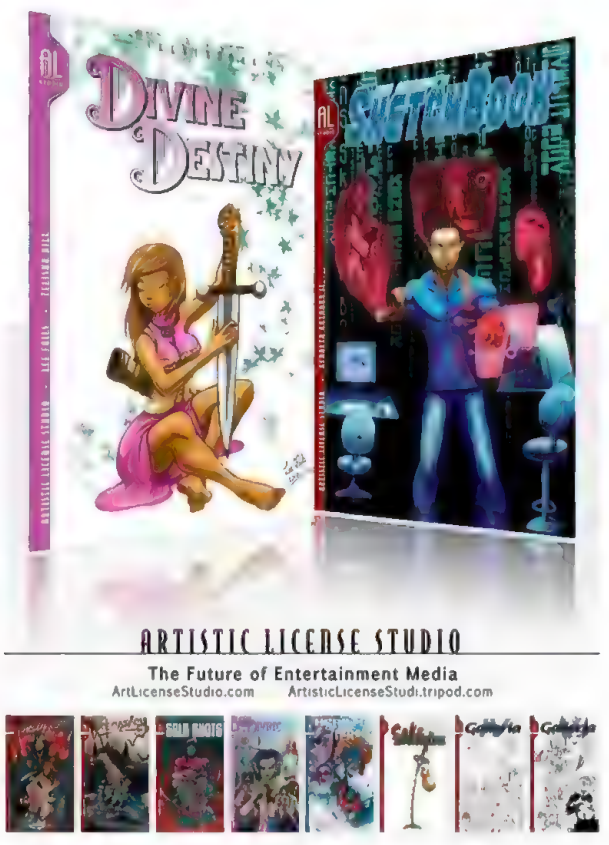
If you want to cultivate an artist's ability, you must be specific. General criticism does no good. Most artists are open to critique, or they wouldn't send their stuff out in the first place. So, I feel like I owe it to them (as long as I'm not the guy with 2000 submissions to get through) to take real time and give an honest critique. It doesn't matter that I'm not the industry standard. I'm still someone whose opinion they want... I should do it correctly. The biggest problem I have with people in my position is when they don't have a bunch of submissions and still they offer up unhelpful, or even overtly negative, critiques. You can be stern, but tearing apart some kid's dreams just because he/she isn't rocking your world right off the bat is the complete opposite of why you're here. I'm here because I've been through many of the trials and the pitfalls of comic creating already. I should be sharing that knowledge so others don't have to find out the hard way. Though sometimes it's the best way to learn, if I can save some talented person a few years of beating their head against a wall that that they should just go around, I'm gonna do it. Plus, giving half-assed critiques or even mean ones is just plain lazy. That's just the worst in my opinion.

KJ: Twenty-three years!!! Tell us a little bit about your very first comic.

Yup. Twenty-three years. I drew my first comic at 12. I stapled it together and handed it out at school. Mixed reviews, at best, but you have to start somewhere. At some point, I realized that I needed to not just show people the only copy of some book I'd made, but that I had to start getting printed copies out there. My mother was a teacher and I went to the school she taught at. It gave me the opportunity to learn a "guerrilla-style" form of comic making with just a copy machine and some 11x17 paper carefully laid out, folded and stapled. It was called "Dreamscape" (it's okay, I laugh my ass off too every time I say it) and it was a collection of stories from my friends and myself. Even then, I wanted to have a "company," so to speak. We took them to local stores and hawked them at the small time "dirt cons" in the area. It was a great lesson in how to talk to people and sell yourself, not just your book. That's what I most try to impart on people coming up. Eventually through high school and college, Dreamscape became more of a 'zine until I decided to take the story and characters I'd been working with my entire youth and make a graphic novel. It took me five years, but in 2006, I published Gods of the New Empire, and finally had something I was ready to show the industry. Again, small steps make for a long journey over time.

KJ: And finally: what is a final word you'd like to leave for those who may follow in your footsteps?

TB: Final words? This business is not for everyone. It's thankless and requires almost all of your time. You will pour much of your time and money into it, just to be ignored by it. But you have to do it, because you love it. Derive your own sense of accomplishment from it. Some days, it's all you have to hold onto. Now that I think about it, it's a lot like owning a cat.



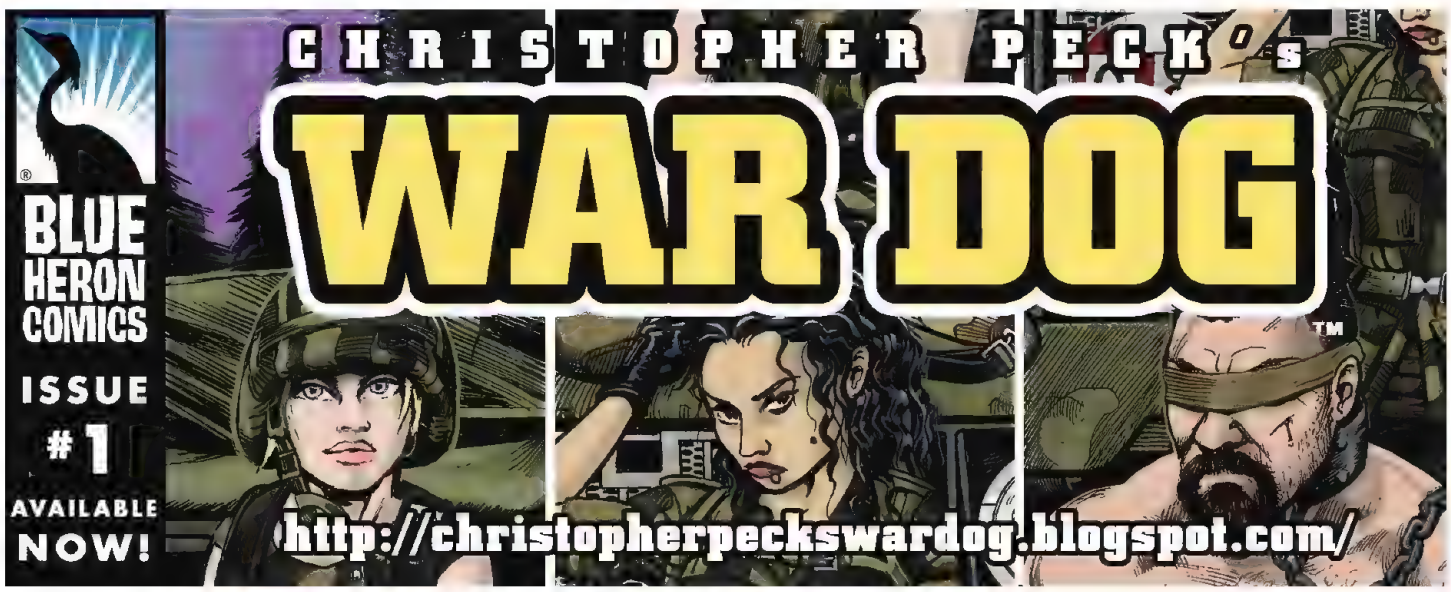
SELF PUBLISHER HALL of FAME

By Ian Shires

Last issue, I put forth an article about the Self-Publisher Hall of Fame, which basically explained what I, personally, am doing to move forward with it. To recap: I am plowing through thousands of names and company names and adding them to the current archive database, so that it is a more complete representation of the people that we have personally been in touch with over the last 27 years. I was asked by a few people why we're listing everyone, why we're not doing nominations/awards, etc. And that's valid, because it is part of something we WANT to do but, as I said last issue, the article was to raise awareness of what has been done so far. The list of "everyone who ever self-published anything" is going to keep growing and building forever, and is intended as a resource. That list is what a real historical society/Hall of Fame needs to draw from for the people it honors. Without the list, we're drawing blanks. Couple that with the fact that the HOF currently has no written guidelines for how we would do inductions/vote, etc., and all I can really do right now is raise awareness of the goals.

The HOF isn't something I want to toss together on my own. I want it to be carefully considered by people who want to build something that will be there long after we are all gone. Only with proper structure and support can induction into it mean anything. I mean, I can easily say Matt Feazell is a great man and deserves honor in a Hall of Fame, and I'd get just about any small-presser from the last two decades to agree. But what would it mean if I just tossed up a web page telling about him and said that he is recognized by the Self Publisher Hall of Fame... if there was no decision process for what qualifies people for consideration? A Hall of Fame cannot honor others, until people honor the HOF as an authority. We can't be an authority, until we have some guidelines, and I'm not going to write those guidelines by myself. I'm not even going to start a first draft until I know I have a group of people together who believe as strongly as I do about forging the Hall of Fame into something strong and real that will outlive us all.

So where last issue's article was to raise awareness and let people know what I was currently doing to prepare, I think this issue is for showing the depth of conviction that I am putting into it. The addition I'm still working on has taken four months of work, and once it's been completed and posted, it will still only be a first little baby step towards what I'm really trying to do. It won't be complete; at some point, I will need more hands doing data entry to keep it growing. I won't just have to teach someone what to do, I'll have to teach someone to teach more people what to do. But that is the backbone that will make every other element of the Hall of Fame possible. Without someone actively doing this research and organizing this data, it will be lost to time. So I am doing it, hoping that once people really see how long and hard I'm willing to work to get it done, they will want to work with me to set up the rest in a true HOF system. And so, I once again present the web page set up for the HOF so far, with the hope the right eyes will eventually see it, and I won't feel so alone in this effort.



LETTERS FROM READERS

At SP!, we are craving your letters! We'd really like to print your thoughts and opinions here for all to see, so if you have something to say about anything you see in the magazine, or if there's something you'd like to see, write in! Feedback is crucial to making this magazine everything it can be, and we are listening! Write to: SP@dimestoreproductions.com

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From: Jim McPherson—jmcp@phantacea.com

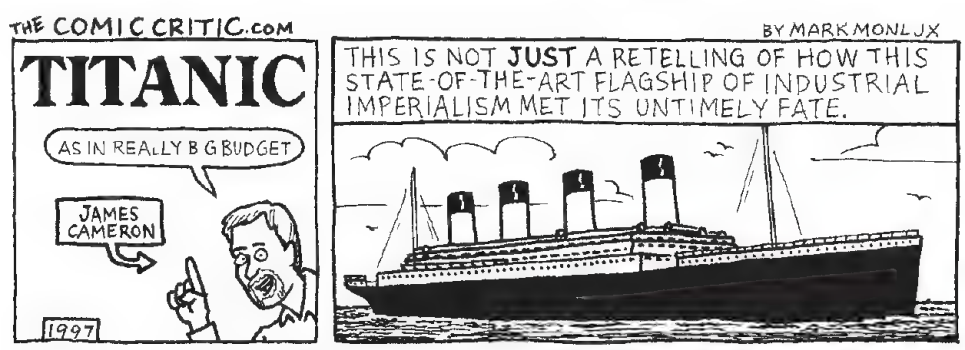
I'm happy to see your research article on POD Printing. However, when you made mention of 'dug into the "big two" of POD,' I didn't catch the reference. Were you referring to Ka-blam/Indyplanet and Drive-thru Comics? I've used Ingram Lightning Source for all my prose books. I've also had them prepare and release some of the books for release as e-books. (I do the Amazon Kindle/I-pad/I-phone ebooks myself, as Ingram LSI doesn't seem to deal with them without reams of paperwork.)

Curiously, when I approached LSI re publishing the Damnation Brigade graphic novel (roughly 6 1/2" by 10 1/4"), they claimed they would only print it on a custom order of 250 copies minimum. If I wanted to use their regular POD-printing and distribution service, I'd have to reduce everything proportionately to trade paperback size (6" x 9").

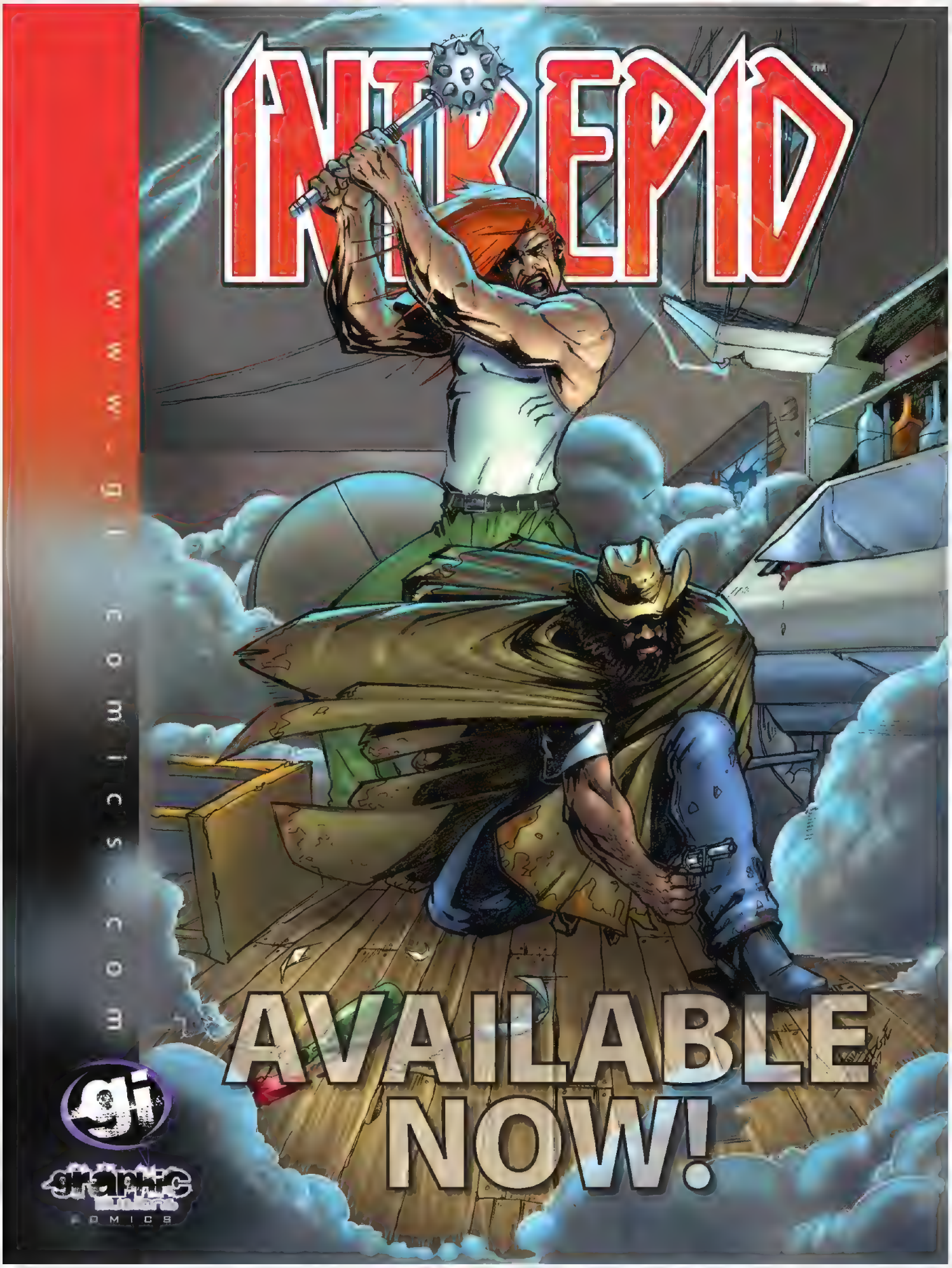
Are you saying that Drive-thru Comics is the way to go? Is the reference to #58 being great to Ka-Blam ("By the way, the B+W saddle-stitched limited print run we did of #58 came out great—25 copies. I still have a few, which I'll probably take to the next show I do.") And have you tried Lulu, which is another Ingram Company?

Any recommendations on where I should go for personal appearances?

[Jim—I was referring to Ka-Blam and Comixpress as the "Big Two" of POD... mainly because they were the first on the scene. I have not personally used or compared prices of Lightning Source directly, over how they work with Drive-Thru, which I did research... but regardless, their rules for leaving blank pages in the book—both inside covers and the last page of the book—kinda turn me off as a publisher. My basic conclusion in my research was that Drive-thru is the best set up I've seen for digital delivery however, it's not all it's cracked up to be if you don't have a huge following to send there to buy your download... and then my basic opinion is, why send your fans somewhere else if you can send them to your own site and knock out a middleman? We were a "Featured Free Product" for a full week on their homepage and in the week's newsletter they send out, and that garnered us a whopping 50-some readers. So if a free book can't get big attention, then their plan for being able to give books attention, just isn't working. The printing of #58 I raved about, was from my own printer, not Ka-Blam; the Ka-Blam version had a wavy spine and the pages were not as even in the book as the same files I sent my own printer, so I wasn't impressed by Ka-Blam printing. My goal, and I'm working with Jay Savage on this, is to re-set up a viable printing option through the SPA. We're working on that, but we don't have anything to show, quite yet. As for shows to go to, the only show I have personally gone to in many, many years, is SPACE (http://www.backporchcomics.com/space.htm), but in general, my advice is to do smaller shows, that don't charge much for table space, or, if you can get in as a guest, even better. Avoid the high-cost, meat market shows. Research the shows; ask around and find out where people actually made money—those are the shows to go to. -Ian]


THE COMIC CRITIC.COM
BY MARK MONLUX
TITANIC
AS IN REALLY B G BUDGET
JAMES CAMERON
1997
THIS IS NOT JUST A RETELLING OF HOW THIS STATE-OF-THE-ART FLAGSHIP OF INDUSTRIAL IMPERIALISM MET ITS UNTIMELY FATE.

You can see the rest of this cartoon movie review at the website. ;P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CREEPY KOFY MOVIE TIME COMIC

An interview by Ellen Fleischer

Creepy Kofy Movie Time Comic Feature Interview

Beyond that door you've been warned not to open, beneath the old creaky wooden stairs, resides the Creepy Kofy Movie Time comic headquarters. Self-Publisher Magazine's very own Ellen Fleischer went where angels fear to tread and spoke to Fruupp, one of the monsters involved in the editorial bullpen who puts the comic together for publisher Mel Smith—who was also present, before having to rush away to go ghost-hunting.

Ellen Fleischer: Let's talk about Creepy Kofy Movie Time. This is a horror comic, correct?

Fruupp: It's based on the Creepy Kofy Movie Time TV show that's now in its eighth successful season and is hosted by a couple of cave-dwelling fiends going by the monikers of No Name and Balrok. Their bawdy party-night humor intersperses screenings of B-movie horror and sci-fi flicks with interviews and live performances by bands, dancers, magicians, and even ghost hunters... The comic reflects that in several respects,—sometimes disrespectfully!

Acme Ink Publisher, Mel Smith: Since I was a kid, I've always been a huge fan of horror-hosted television shows. Lucky for me, the area I live in started up a new program featuring two hosts dressed up as a demon and a ghoul, respectively, who introduce horrible horror movies. I'd been knee-deep in publishing Gumby and writing for other companies, when the idea struck me to do a twist on the horror comic genre by using these two guys as the theme.

I began forming the basic concept that would be used on the book, and then went and approached Promotions Coordinator Mark Baker and the hosts, Balrok and No Name, for their approval to do the comic book. They agreed wholeheartedly. I used my Acme Ink imprint to carry out this mission. Acme is separate from our established line of books and is the perfect place to play around with ideas outside the mainstream.

The comic book's title is the same as the show itself, Creepy Kofy Movie Time. It's a fitting name for the main idea of the book, which is an anthology with a bunch of short horror/sci-fi stories—not necessarily based on the show—but the type of movies they play. We did include a few of the characters from the show in stories like Slob and The Cave Girls, because both of those were perfect fits. Outside of that, it was an open invitation of ideas for the first issue.

Ellen Fleischer: Horror can mean different things to different people. Would you say that the stories in the magazine are focused on a particular subgenre (creepy, suspenseful, gory), or is it more of a mixed bag?

Fruupp: It's the whole nine-yards and maybe more, because if you give us an inch, we'll take a mile! But as we're developing this, we're trying to approach it in a balanced way. So, while you have

something like Bumpires & Bumhunters, which appeared in CKMT #1 and crosses into the slasher sub-genre, Wolf's Bane was a more traditional twist-in-the-tale scenario. The stories for the first one were put together pretty quickly. Tell the lady all about it, Mel.

Mel Smith: I contacted my good friend Darick Robertson about doing the cover, since he was a fan of the show like me. He was in. Score! Then, I picked Paul H Birch to write a story. Paul has edited a load of my books and I've always enjoyed his writing. This was an opportunity for me to put him center stage where he belongs. And I'm proud to say he went beyond my wildest imagination!! Next was a newcomer named Ken Thomas (aka Lazy Bones), a diamond in the rough. This guy is like Bruce Willis in Invincible. He doesn't know his abilities or have full confidence yet, but when he does, watch out! Lastly, I was able to bring my good friend Stefan Jackson on board for his first published comic work. Stef writes books. The real ones with words and no pictures. Serious stuff. So to see him shift gears effortlessly into comics was pure beauty. That alone makes the book worth its price tag, but, even better, we took it to 12 with the additions of spectacular artwork by the likes of Roland Bird—who contributed to Paul's tale, Edbon Sevilleno—who teamed up with Lazy Bones on a vampire twist sure to blow your mind, Manuel Martinez—who took on two pages written by the show's hosts, and the legendary Trevor Von Eeden—who illustrated Stef's captivating tale. On top of that, we had Ken Hooper adapting The Cave Girls literally off the pages and into the fanboys' arms for a night, and John Hageman perfectly providing the howls with Strephon Taylor on Slob, to make Creepy Kofy Movie Time #1 the real deal for the fans of the show, and fans of comic books alike.

MR AND MRS TWINKLE HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR FORTY THREE YEARS. ALL OF THEM BLISSFUL, OR SO EVERYONE SUPPOSED.
AFTER ALL, THEY WERE JUST LIKE ANY OTHER COUPLE WHO HAD GROWN UP TOGETHER, COURTED, THEN TIED THE KNOT...
OKAY, SURE, THEY HAD THEIR UPS AND DOWNS BUT DIDN'T EVERYONE?
YOU'RE A SLOPPY EATER, A GOODFERNUTHING LAZY SONNUVABITCH, YOU SNORE LIKE A HALF-SOUSED RHINOCEROUS SUFFERIN' WITH HAY FEVER...
BUT-
..AND YOU NEVER EVER SHUT UP AND LET ME GET A WORD IN EDGE-WAYS!!
THEY HAD COME TO SEE A MARRIAGE GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR. MRS TWINKLE WAS UNHAPPY. SHE HAD DISCOVERED "SOMETHING DARK AND DEVIANT" ABOUT MR TWINKLE, SHE SAID TO THE NICE RECEPTIONIST WHEN BOOKING THE APPOINTMENT.
WHEN PROMPTED, MRS TWINKLE, SHYLY AND MOST SHAMEFULLY EXPLAINED...
"I MARRIED A CREATURE FROM OUTER SPACE!"
© SCRIPT – PAUL H. BIRCH ART – MATS ENGESTEN LETTERS – JOHN ROBBINS.

Fruupp: And he did all of that prior to signing his deal with the devil, which is when us guys in the Monster's Bullpen came along to help put it together, alongside some consulting advice from Paul H Birch.

Ellen Fleischer: How long have you been working in comics?

Mel Smith: I broke into the business during the 80s black-and-white boom period, initially drawing and writing for Pyramid Comics, and progressing onto others like Marvel and Malibu, notably its Rock-It imprint. I co-founded Wild Card Ink with the intent of producing a charity comic with profits going towards feeding the homeless. The resulting publication was Feed America's Children featuring Major Impact. We then brought back the children's television favorite Gumby and it won the 2007 Eisner Award for Best Publication for a Younger Audience. Recently, we put out a trade publication of Dead Ahead, that I co-wrote, illustrated by living legend Alex Nino and originally published by Image.

Fruupp: I got into comics quite late. My first gig was working on The Bayeux Tapestry, but I got fired for changing the storyline.

With regards to the anthology's contributors, as Mel said, we had Darick Robertson produce the first issue's cover, and he's drawn books like The

Punisher, Wolverine, The Boys, and Happy, so that's some major pedigree. Likewise, Trevor Von Eeden was practically a kid when he co-created Black Lightning before working on Batman, Green Arrow, and my own personal favorite, Thriller, all for DC back in the day, so to have him come on board with Corrina, the tale of a witch queen from New Orleans, is awesome and the fact that it features in both #1 and 2 will prove a great treat for readers.

Another ongoing strip was derived from a concept Mel came up with around the go-go dancing Cave Girls on the CKMT TV show that Ken Hooper (Aquaman, Indiana Jones, The Mighty Crusaders) took in a whole other epic direction. If you liked Williamson, Frazetta and Crandell, and that crowd, you'll enjoy this too. That's being dialogued by a magazine journalist named Christine Logan who's new to comics; we've also got people who've been floating round the independent scene, and guys as far afield as Italy and Sweden who've got strips coming up in #2 and 3 that are already in-house (here under the stairs).

Ellen Fleischer: You must have a lot of stories about the industry! Can you share a couple with us?

Fruupp: Not without a lawyer present!

Ellen Fleischer: Which are some of your favorite CKMT stories, and what makes them stand out for you?

Mel Smith: The contributors all blew the doors off the hinges, both artistically and story-wise with CKMT #1.

Fruupp: The show's host, Balrok, really liked the pin-up Gary Crutchley did in #1. Gary's work's was published over here by Fanta-Co, Eternity and Caliber during the early 90s boom in horror comics. He's also done work for Britain's bestselling sci-fi weekly comic 2000AD, so we grabbed him for CKMT. His art on an Ed Gorey-influenced three page strip for #2 is gorgeous, gross, and funny. Ken Hooper's art is always a master class to view in the Cave Girls' strips, Corrina is an ace thriller series with voodoo, vampires and a beautiful lead character, while the variety of sci-fi and horror strips we have to choose from Paul H Birch allows us breathing space, should someone miss a deadline. Not that they will, because we'll send the boys 'round and in our case, that means great big hairy things with teeth like razors!

Ellen Fleischer: Do you have any other projects on the horizon?

Fruupp: Mel Smith has just left the building, folks, but I know he's got a collection of The Seven Lives of Dr Phibes and a new Death Race mini-series in the works (due from Bluewater), that he's worked on with a number of CKMT contributors. More than that, readers can catch up with him and get a signed copy of the comic at one of the many shows he will be attending this year.

For those of us here in the Monsters' Bullpen, a few of us might be called upon by some great and dark master—or a temporary mortal fool who's put us under a spell—but for the most part, we're pretty happy with the deal we've got here: putting together what's shaping up to be a terrific series with some great artwork and really cool stories coming through. Let me tell you, mortal kind, Creepy Kofy Movie Time is one anthology comic you seriously don't want to miss!

Just to let you know, Creepy Kofy Movie Time should be available from all good comic shops via Diamond, direct from Acme Ink, and at shows. To keep up with what's happening in CKMT land you can check out http://www.facebook.com/CreepyKofyMovietimeComic pretty much every day.

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